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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
TAYLOR LOOP RECREATION PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: Environmental Assessment: Taylor Loop Recreation Project

ABSTRACT: As a result of changes to policy and USDA Forest Service program emphasis, some recreation planners are faced with the task of completing environmental analysis as a part of complex recreation planning efforts. The key to meeting the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for these proposals is a two-tiered Environmental Assessment (EA).

The EA for the Taylor Loop Recreation Project demonstrates how to organize an EA to describe the effects of the overall programmatic alternatives that must be considered, while also addressing the site specific alternatives to be considered at each individual recreation site. Without this approach the EA may either fail to address the overall effects of the many individual connected recreation projects, or may fail to be site specific enough to allow implementation without additional environmental analysis.

Keywords: Environmental Analysis, Environmental Assessment, Recreation Planning

PREFACE

Forest Service policy and management emphasis has changed independently in recent years in the areas of recreation planning and environmental analysis. As a result, recreation managers are faced with a new paradigm in developing and submitting recreation construction and reconstruction projects for funding.

Paradigm shifts include the following:

1. The "America's Great Outdoors" agenda of previous administrations provided a renewed emphasis in upgrading existing and providing new recreation facilities and opportunities to the public. This caused a shift in planning in the recreation field from small individual recreation projects, to large comprehensive projects.

2. As of March 1991, Region 2 of the Forest Service implemented a policy that National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements must be met before Capitol Improvement Projects (CIP) can be submitted for funding.

3. Forest Service NEPA manual direction changed on September 21, 1992. As a result, construction and reconstruction of recreation facilities such as campgrounds may no longer be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental assessment (EA). At a minimum, an EA and Decision Notice is now required for these projects. Prior to September 21, 1992, recreation planners were able to meet and document the requirements of NEPA for projects of similar scope and complexity to the Taylor Loop Recreation Project, through scoping and documentation in a one page memo.

The net effect of these changes was and is to cause recreation managers to launch into large and lengthy processes to plan and submit comprehensive and complex recreation projects for funding. Planners still in this planning process on September 21, 1992, were thrown into the additional new territory of completing an EA on these complex projects. This is new to many if not most recreation planners.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a case study and an example of how a comprehensive recreation project can be addressed in an environmental analysis. This EA will demonstrate how to organize the document to describe the effects of the overall programmatic alternatives that must be considered, while also addressing the site specific alternatives considered at each campground, trail head or other recreation site. This two-tiered organization in an EA is the key to addressing a recreation project proposal that involves a large land base and many individual recreation sites and programs.

This paper is primarily directed toward recreation managers faced with the task of completing an environmental analysis on a complex project. Secondarily, this paper is also directed toward Forest Service management. As policy and program shifts are made, often independently, the ripple effect can and did in this case, cause a significant shift in personnel resources to respond to the changes. This ripple effect can be unforeseen, and can be significant. It seems reasonable to feed back the effect to those making program or policy shifts, so they can at least get a sense of the effects on the cost of doing business.

The EA itself has a broader audience than EAs in the past. This is again because of a policy shift. New appeal regulations which went into effect in January 1994 require that EAs receive a 30 day public comment period. As a result, this EA is written for review by the local public as well as for review by Forest Service and other agency managers.

Many individuals contributed to the completion of this Environmental Analysis. Their names and roles in the process are as follows:

Jim Barry- Forester (lands and roads)
Jeff Burch- Forest NEPA Coordinator (advisor)
Jim Dawson- District Ranger (responsible line officer)
Peggy Dobie- District Resource Clerk (typing, graphics)
Sarah Eichhorn- Landscape Architect (scoping, graphics)
Mark Hatcher- Range Conservationist (air, water, soils and vegetation)
Craig Magwire- Interdisciplinary Team Leader (recreation, trails, community effects)
Wendy Reinmuth- Wildlife Biologist
Ray Rossman- Archeologist
Peggy Schick- District Administration Officer (consistency with other plans)
Tracy Smith- District Clerk (typing)

The Case Study

In addition to providing an example of the EA document which follows this Preface, there may be some value to the reader in understanding the pitfalls, struggles, and strategies that eventually led to a successful recreation plan. This description of "The Case Study" will attempt to provide a sketch of the process.

In March of 1991, the USDA Forest Service Region 2 developed recreation leaders made a pilgrimage to every Forest in the Region. Their message was emphatic.

> The emphasis and the money is coming for improvements in developed recreation under the America's Great Outdoors program. Region 2 could be in a position to take advantage of this renewed interest within the administration and the agency if it only got its planning act together. Think big.

The message was clearly delivered that this was one of those rare opportunities in time when with a renewed interest in recreation, a wave of funding would approach, meet, and pass us. All we had to do was get prepared to surf the wave and cash in on recreation improvements for our Forests and Districts, and ultimately let us hope, for the benefit of the public.

Forest leadership teams were faced with the dilemma of weighing the risks and potential benefits of becoming believers in the cause. Team players and forward thinkers were defined by those who got on board.

The Leadership Team of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests took the leap of faith and dedicated significant resources to the effort of developing comprehensive recreation plans for submittal. Most Districts combined their efforts for even larger and grander plans. The bigger the better. Planning began on four major Capitol Investment Projects (CIP) on the GMUG. A team of engineers and landscape architects was formed in the Supervisors Office to assist in the development of the supporting documents needed for project submittal. Districts added this major planning task on recreation staffs already overloaded with keeping the wheels turning on the existing workload.

The deadline for submittal was a year away and the race had begun. By April of 1992 all these projects except one were packaged, submitted, and later accepted by the Regional CIP Team. The projects were placed in the CIP "Hopper" awaiting the funding wave to arrive. The exception was the Taylor Loop Recreation Project (TLRP) which never left the Forest for regional review. The project had stalled in development.

The project stalled for the following reasons:

1. The area encompassed by the project is complex, not lending itself to simple easy solutions or visions for the future. A clearly articulated vision of what we were trying to accomplish had not been formed, at the time the project was submitted for review at the Forest level.

2. Large egos were involved, making consensus building difficult.

3. There were different opinions outside and inside the Forest Service and at different levels within the Forest Service about what current and future visitors want and need. Therefore opinions differed about what the TLRP should include.

4. There was a lack of specific research on the needs of visitors in the near and distant future.

5. There was a lack of a unified understanding of the suitability of the land within the TLRP for various kinds of recreation. There was a lack of understanding on how the National Forest portion of the land base and the private and other public land would work together to provide a range of opportunities for the public.

To understand how some of these problems were eventually resolved requires at least a basic understanding of the planning area. Map 1 of the EA depicts the planning area for the TLRP. This area is best understood as having three distinct parts; The Taylor River Canyon along Road #742 from Almont to Taylor Reservoir, the area within a couple of miles of Taylor Reservoir, and the remote areas which involve the country that surrounds the canyon and reservoir.

The Taylor Canyon and the Taylor Reservoir areas are characterized by existing developed recreation facilities on National Forest land and private recreation development on private land. The private land development includes summer homes, rental cabins and rustic resorts, and a small store and restaurant. The main difference between these two areas is terrain and congestion. Taylor Canyon is very narrow, confined, and feels full. It is full of facilities and during the summer months it is full of people. Taylor Reservoir lies in a broad open valley with generous open space and vistas. It does not feel crowded. The remote areas are made up of terrain that is similar to the area around the Reservoir, but do not have the level of facility development. These are semi-primitive areas, where dispersed camping and day use activities take place.

In the simplest form the Forest Service goals for the project area as a whole are the following:

1. Retrofit, upgrade, or "modernize" existing developed facilities.
2. Recognize and address the demand for day use activities and facilities in Taylor Canyon.
3. Increase the Developed Campground capacity in Taylor Park as outlined in the Forest Plan.
4. Provide a broader spectrum of developed recreation opportunities than currently exist.
5. Manage dispersed recreation activities and dispersed recreation settings to maintain that setting and form of recreation in the remote areas.

In the simplest form the key public concerns besides simply "don't change anything", are the following:

1. Taylor Canyon is congested, don't add anything there.
2. Maintain the "primitive" character of the canyon and the entire project area. We don't want campgrounds with showers, electricity, and paving, especially in the canyon.
3. Maintain water quality. "We are afraid of shower, RV dump, and sewage systems in Taylor canyon so close to the river".

In hindsight, many of the early proposals for the TLRP did not meet the simple agency goals outlined above. In addition they managed to conflict directly with the concerns of the local public. It seems early on that the project was simply too big to visualize comprehensively. What resulted were proposals that were more a listing of independent possible actions, not a coherent unified approach.

Examples of some early proposals that drew criticism either internally or externally are listed below:

1. Construct an RV dump station in Taylor Canyon.
2. Add shower and flush toilet facilities to existing facilities in Taylor Canyon.
3. Add a new campground to Taylor Canyon with 30 to 50 additional sites.

4. Add a new RV dump station in Taylor Park.
5. Add additional paving in Taylor Park; not only in some campgrounds but by extending pavement on the main arterial roads.
6. Add a separate bike lane in Taylor Canyon.
7. Add a grocery store/ dump station/operations center for a concession operation in the canyon.

Comments received on the early proposal include the following:

"Taylor Park: Where is the Forest Service headed"
"The Forest Service plan ... has left me wondering where our Forest Service is headed... in order to entice growing tourist industry and compete with other Forest Service districts we need to develop "urbanized" campsites in Taylor Canyon. (Gunnison Country Times February 17, 1993)

"Your proposal will eliminate a very unique, rare and valuable recreation opportunity- the opportunity that currently is available in the Taylor Park and Canyon area. You will replace it with multitudes of Winnebagos, electric generators, boom box radios and enough people to be reminiscent of the rainbow gathering of recent past. Do not do what has been done thousands of times in this country, that is seriously degrade recreation opportunities under the guise of improvement." (Art Hayes, Gunnison, Colorado)

Final success in the planning and acceptance of the TLRP came from a logical combining of Forest Service goals and major public concerns into a clear and simple vision of the future. Success also involved understanding that public acceptance and support is essential. This means only advancing proposals that the public can understand and accept. Other proposals are either the wrong thing to do, or are advanced at the wrong time.

Current Situation and Vision for the Future

Taylor Canyon
The Canyon is at capacity. Day use exceeds exisiting capacity for parking and picnic sites.

Remove obsolete facilities that cannot be effectively reconstructed, reducing the level of use in the canyon. Convert some campgrounds to day use facilities to better accommodate the day use demand.

Taylor Reservoir
Demand for developed campgrounds exceeds supply. Existing private facilities are more developed in nature (restaurant, gas station, rental cabins etc.).

Add to campground capacity by expanding the existing campground and building a new campground. Draw developed site use from the canyon to the reservoir area. Campgrounds near the reservoir should contain the more developed facilities such as showers and flush toilets as they are in keeping with adjacent facilities and will add to the range of facilities we offer in the project area.

Remote Areas

Dispersed semi-primitive camping is the largest single type of opportunity supplied in the TLRP area. The terrain and primitive road system is very well suited for this type of recreation.

Manage for dispersed recreation. Prevent Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) creep. Do not add developed facilities in these areas as a response to increasing use. Maintain the semi-primitive character of the setting. Add information on primitive car camping ethics at main road junctions and portals. Manage roads and camping by encouraging use on appropriate roads, and closing poor roads and campsites.

Once a clear vision was articulated the project elements being debated fell more easily into place. The remaining task leading to success involved personal contacts to explain the approach to be taken. Because ego conflicts between players was one of the problems to overcome meetings were obviously the wrong format to "sell" the proposal. It became a case of shuttle diplomacy to explain the vision and how progress would be made with this proposal. Meetings and phone conversations were first held with key players within the Forest Service. This list included key District staff, the District Ranger, the Forest Recreation and Engineering Staff, and with their support finally the Forest Supervisor and key CIP players in the Regional Office. Each individual player needed to be shown how their ideas were incorporated or why their idea was in conflict with the Forest Service goal or a public concern. The objective of each contact was to obtain a commitment to support the proposal.

Once the internal act was together, key external players had to be contacted for their support. The list of contacts included the County Commissioners, the County Planning Commission, key local residents and business people within the TLRP, environmental groups, and permittees. Contacts were made in person when possible.

Comments received during the review of the final proposal include the following:

"Changes in the Taylor rec plan reflect public comments"

"The Forest Service was listening when the public said it didn't want new campgrounds in Taylor Canyon." (Gunnison Country Times, March 2,1994)

"The Gunnison County Board of County Commissioners sincerely appreciates the effort you have made to address the public's comment from the last round of discussion regarding this project. We believe that, for the most part, those concerns have been addressed." (Gunnison County Board of Commissioners)

"I want to thank you and your staff for listening to the residents and property owners in the area and changing this plan to conform to their desires and concerns. The final report you submitted somewhat restores my faith in the system." (David E. Gore)

"The EA has been done very thoroughly and certainly reflects the concerns and ideas of the property owners and visitors to the canyon. The recommendations in the report, if implemented, will help maintain the character of the canyon." (J.E.Cannon)

The final TLRP proposal combined Forest Service goals for recreation with major public concerns and formed a clear and simple vision for the future. Added to this was a recognition that change is often incremental, and public support is essential. The result for the TLRP is a proposal that eventually received general Forest Service support and public support.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) was sent to 72 individuals and organizations during the comment period. Comments were received from 13 different individuals and groups. The Decision Notice was sent to the same individuals and included our responses to their comments to the EA. The 45 day appeal period ended without an appeal.

The irony in this effort is that the time required to do the planning job right was too long for the TLRP to catch the peak of the funding wave. So we have public support and a well thought plan and a CIP funding sea that is becoming flat. The wave has come and gone. But there are still great benefits from the planning effort. Many of the actions prescribed in the TLRP can be accomplished without Forest Service CIP funds. Projects near Taylor Reservoir may be accomplished by the Bureau of Reclamation. Projects to improve access to fishing can be accomplished by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. An RV dump station may be built by Wal-Mart, and a major new campground will be made available for private construction and operation. At the very least we now have a shared vision of the future and we can measure future opportunities against that vision and decide whether or not they belong.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

TAYLOR LOOP RECREATION PROJECT

GRAND MESA, UNCOMPAHGRE AND GUNNISON NATIONAL FORESTS

TAYLOR RIVER AND CEBOLLA RANGER DISTRICT

March 1994

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
TAYLOR LOOP RECREATION PROJECT

I. *INTRODUCTION*

The purpose of this Environmental Assessment (EA) is to describe the environmental effects of the proposed Taylor Loop Recreation Project (TLRP). This is a proposal to repair, update and add to recreation facilities and opportunities in the Taylor River Canyon, Taylor Park and Spring Creek areas. This proposal includes work on campgrounds, picnic sites, trails, dispersed camping areas, fishing access sites, roads, a boat launch, RV dump stations, interpretation and information facilities, and employee housing. Implementation of this project is dependent on funding and participation by Partners. On-the-ground work would not start until June of 1995 at the earliest.

Several alternatives to the proposed action are described in this document. Each of the alternatives, except the No Action Alternative, is designed to carry out the purpose of repairing and updating the recreation facilities and opportunities in the project area.

This Environmental Assessment is not a decision document. It does not describe the decision to be made by the Forest Supervisor with regard to this proposed project. This Environmental Assessment discloses the environmental consequences of implementing the proposed action and alternatives to that proposed action. The Forest Supervisor's decision will be stated and explained in a Decision Notice accompanying the final Environmental Assessment.

This EA focuses on the environmental effects associated with the proposed action on the Taylor River and Cebolla Ranger District of the Grand Mesa Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests. Impacts which may occur in surrounding communities are also described in this document so that other landowners and decision-makers may be aware of the implications of the Forest Service project. Other federal, state and local jurisdictions have assisted in the analysis and disclosure of these environmental consequences.

A. BACKGROUND

The project area encompasses approximately 160,000 acres of land ranging from the high mountain peaks of Italian Mountain (13,000 feet +), Fossil Mountain in the Fossil Ridge Wilderness (12,000 feet +), and Mirror Lake near Tincup Pass (11,500 feet +) to the Taylor River Canyon which begins at Almont at 8,000 feet. The project area encompasses the Taylor River Basin including the Spring Creek, Trail Creek, Willow Creek, and Texas Creek drainages.

This area includes over 100 miles of trails and 150 miles of four-wheel-drive roads. Existing campgrounds provide 264 developed campsites that range in character from primitive to somewhat rural. Of these campsites, 145 are located in the Taylor Canyon, 61 sites are in the vicinity of Taylor Park Reservoir and 58 sites are in the outlying areas of Spring Creek, upper Taylor Park, and at Mirror Lake. There are also an estimated 250 primitive dispersed campsites in remote locations of the project area. The project area is illustrated on Map 1.

B. PURPOSE AND NEED

The majority of the 15 campgrounds and other recreation facilities in the project area were built in the 1960's. They need to be repaired to better meet current health and safety standards and to accommodate present day users. Many visitors drive vehicles or pull trailers that do not fit safely on the parking

spurs or roads of the existing campground and picnic sites. Most recreation facilities do not meet current ADAAG (Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines) standards.

Examination of the current grouping or concentration of recreation sites is needed in order to avoid amplifying problems associated with increasing use and congestion in Taylor Canyon.

There are an estimated 250 dispersed primitive campsites in remote locations of the project area. This represents nearly half of the campsites located in the project area. These remote camping and picnic areas have been established through repeated use over the years. They are receiving increasing use and are suffering impacts to soil, vegetation, and water quality. Some sites and vehicle routes are poorly located (such as in riparian areas) and need to be closed.

Existing RV dump stations and boat access to the reservoir are minimal and do not meet the needs of visitors.

Existing trails are eroding and are in need of repair and clearing work. Trailheads are inadequate and winter trails are poorly marked. Some roads in the project area are washboarded and produce excessive dust much of the summer season, creating safety concerns.

Interpretation and environmental education opportunities are minimal and are not meeting the needs of visitors.

Employee housing at the Taylor Park Guard Station is in need of repairs and renovations to respond to the changing needs of our work force.

Management direction contained in the Amended Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) states that the Forest will meet the demand for dispersed recreation outside of Wilderness, and meet 50% of the increased demand for developed recreation.

Traffic data indicates that more people are coming to this area. The GMUG Forest Plan indicates that demand exceeds supply for developed recreation opportunities in the Taylor Park area.

Forest Plan management direction calls for providing economic growth of industries and communities dependent on Forest outputs, including tourism.

II. *PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROPOSED ACTION*

A. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The Taylor Loop Recreation Project proposal has evolved as a result of extensive scoping and input from the public beginning in the fall of 1991. The last presentation to the public was in April of 1993 at two separate public forums. The first meeting was held at Almont Resort and was followed by a meeting before the Gunnison County Commissioners. As a result of the public comments received at those meetings and subsequent input from individuals, the project steering committee and resource specialists, the project proposal has changed shape. Many of the elements that were of concern to the local public have been eliminated from the project proposal.

Major project elements that are NO LONGER a part of the PROPOSED ACTION include the following:

1. Constructing new dump stations at the junction of the Taylor Pass and Cottonwood Pass roads and at Lottis Campground have been dropped from the proposed action and eliminated from further analysis.

2. Paving the Taylor Park Road from the end of the current pavement to Rivers End Campground was proposed. This proposal is no longer in the proposed action but is evaluated as a component in Alternative D of this EA.

3. Constructing a new boating access facility adjacent to River's End Campground has been eliminated from further consideration.

4. Campgrounds that were proposed in the spring of 1993 for Taylor Canyon that are no longer a part of the proposed action include a 30 unit campground at "The Slot" above White Water Resort and a 10 unit "Meadows" tent campground.

5. Flush toilets and/or shower facilities are no longer a part of the proposed action for Lottis and Spring Creek Campgrounds. They are also not in the proposed action for any facilities in the Canyon.

B. PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action considers projected recreation needs for the next 20 years. This action is referred to as **Alternative C** or the Preferred Alternative in this environmental analysis. The proposed action is illustrated on Maps 1 and 2.

The proposed action entails removing and revegetating two of the nine campgrounds in Taylor Canyon (Cold Springs and Lodgepole) that are too close to the road and in locations too confining to allow for reconstruction. In addition, Almont and North Bank Campgrounds are converted to day use areas to better facilitate picnicking, trail use, access to the Gunnison and Taylor Rivers, and the demand for day use opportunities in the Canyon.

The reduction of the developed sites by 12% and campsites by 22% in Taylor Canyon is offset by increasing the number of sites near Taylor Reservoir. A new 100 unit campground is constructed near Texas Creek, and a new 15 site loop is added to Lakeview Campground. These new facilities are proposed in screened wooded areas away from the edge of the reservoir. Rivers End Campground is converted to day use. In this proposal, only day use facilities are located at the edge of the reservoir. Camping facilities are provided in the two campgrounds set back from the reservoir. The number of developed sites (campsites and picnic sites) in the vicinity of Taylor Reservoir increases by 106 with this proposal.

The number of developed campsites in remote areas, (Mirror Lake, Dinner Station, Dorchester, and Mosca Campgrounds), remains the same. These campgrounds are repaired or reconstructed. Picnic sites are added to the boat access area at Spring Creek Reservoir.

The total number of developed camp and picnic sites increases from 265 to 361 in the entire project area. There is a wider range (high, medium, and low) of developed recreation facilities available in this proposal than currently exists. High, medium and low "site development levels" are defined in the description of alternatives section of this document. Primitive undeveloped campsites in dispersed areas would continue to represent the largest type of camping opportunity in the project area.

Amphitheaters and primitive play areas would be included in 3 campgrounds: Lakeview, Lottis and the new Texas Creek Campground. Showers and flush toilets would be a part of two campgrounds: a new loop at Lakeview Campground and at the new Texas Creek Campground. In order to better facilitate proper disposal of trailer(RV) liquid wastes, the road to the existing Taylor Park dump station on Willow Creek would be paved. An additional dump station will be constructed at the southern end of the project area on Walmart or City of Gunnison land at the edge of Gunnison, subject to establishing agreements with either Walmart or the City to carry out this action.

The proposed action includes rehabilitating campsites and closing poor sites and vehicle routes in the following dispersed car camping areas: The road to Mirror Lakes, Texas Creek, Upper Taylor River, Italian Creek, Spring Creek Reservoir and Spring Creek. Information boards and brochures would be developed to inform the public about minimizing their vehicle and camping impacts in these remote locations.

Day use areas outside of developed campgrounds are rehabilitiated or reconstructed to confine parking and minimize effects of concentrated use. The following areas would receive work: Taylor Canyon rock climbing area, Potholes 1&2, Bull Point, Taylor Canyon gold medal fishing access, Timberline Overlook, and Taylor Canyon roadside pulloffs and fishing access. Toilets would be added at Potholes 1&2, and at Bull Point on the Taylor Park Reservoir.

Over seventy miles of summer trails are repaired to meet the standard for existing uses. Winter trails for cross-coutry skiing and snowmobiling are signed and a brochure developed. Five summer trailhead parking areas are defined and reconstructed, and trailhead signing provided. These trailheads are Field Branch, Doctor Park/Deadman, Matchless/Dustin, Star, and Lily Pond.

Four sections of primary roads through the area would receive dust abatement and some sections will be paved in order to provide for safety and to reduce dust or improve access.

Tincup Road #765 is paved from the Taylor Park Road to the Junction with the existing RV dump station and sewage lagoon (3.8 miles). The remainder of the existing gravel road receives treatment for dust to the town of Tincup. Bridges would be reconstructed.

Spring Creek Road #744 is paved for 1/10 mile in front of the Spring Creek Campground and for 1/2 mile on the steep section at the Little Falls Bridge. The remainder of the road to Mosca Campground is treated for dust. (11 miles).

Taylor Park Road #742 receives treatment for dust, from the end of the pavement to the junction with Rocky Brook Road #748.

The employee housing at the Taylor Park Guard Station along Cottonwood Pass is repaired. Trailer pads are added that will accommodate additional volunteers or seasonal employees.

C. DECISIONS TO BE MADE

The Forest Supervisor's decision will be documented in a Decision Notice accompanying the final Environmental Assessment. Two levels of decisions will be made. The first decision level addresses the overall emphasis that will be provided in the Taylor Loop Recreation Project area. This decision involves the overall collection of projects to be implemented in developed recreation sites, dispersed recreation sites, trails and roads. The alternatives considered in this EA are made up of different combinations of site specific projects. Each alternative would provide a different recreation emphasis in the project area.

The second level of decision involves choosing from a range of actions or "options" that may be implemented at each specific site.

Map 1

ALTERNATIVE C- PROPOSED ACTION- CAMPGROUNDS & DAY USE AREAS
Taylor Loop Recreation Project
Taylor River/ Cebolla Ranger District

LEGEND

- ANALYSIS AREA BOUNDARY (APPROX. 160,000 ACRES)
- NATIONAL FOREST BOUNDARY
- WILDERNESS AREA
- CAMPGROUND–SEE LIST BELOW
- CAMPGROUND TO BE REMOVED AND REVEGETATE
- NEW CAMGROUND
- DAY USE AREA–SEE LIST BELOW
- TRAILER DUMP STATION–SEE LIST BELOW
- FOREST SERVICE GUARD STATION

FACILITIES

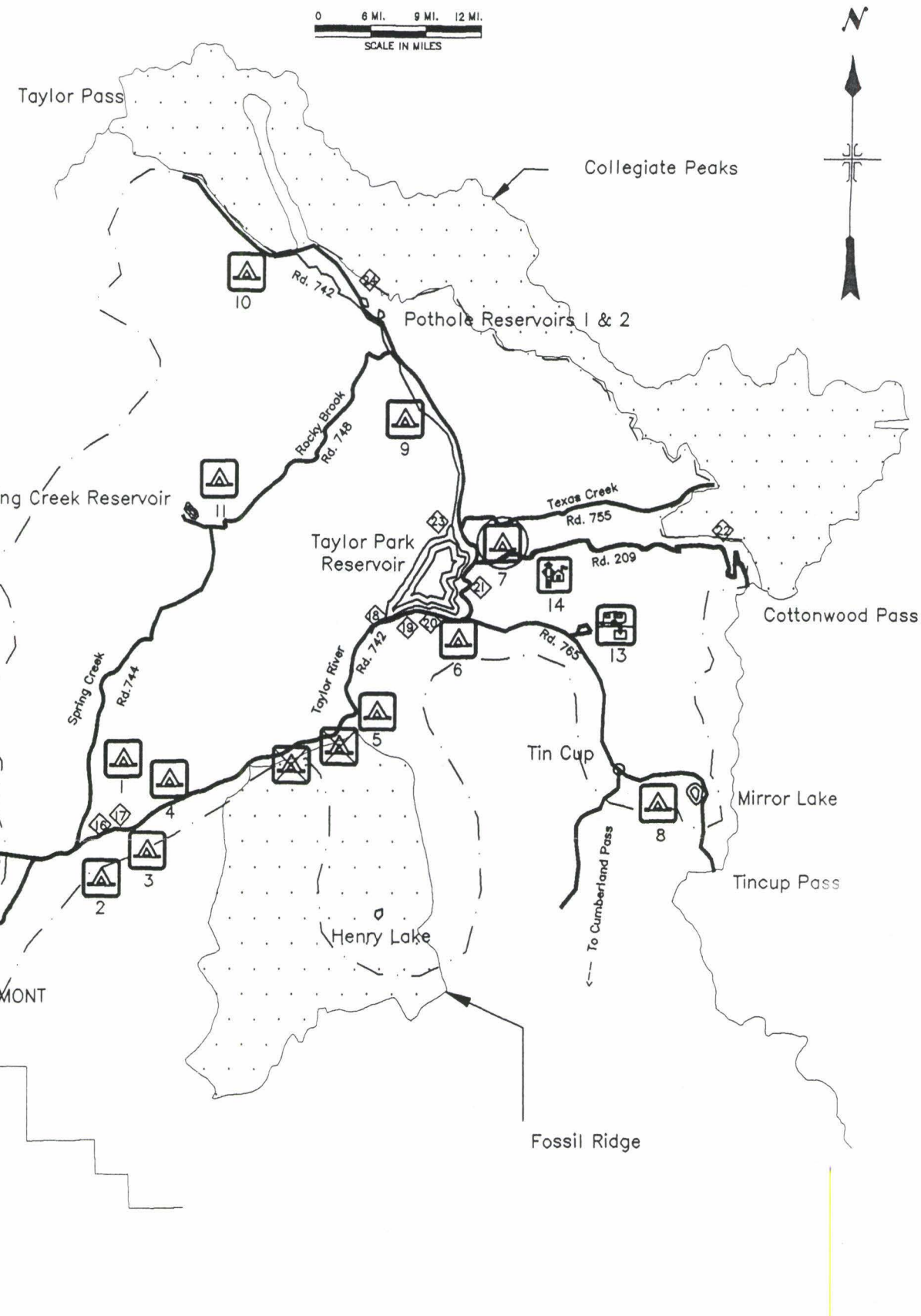
1 Spring Creek
2 Granite Wall
3 Onemile
4 Rosy Lane
5 Lottis
6 Lakeview
7 Texas Creek (new)
8 Mirror Lake
9 Dinner Station
10 Dorchester
11 Mosca

NOTE: Cold Springs & Lodgepole Campgrounds will be removed & revegetated

12 Trailer Dump Station at Wal–Mart
13 Taylor Park Lagoon Dump Station
14 Taylor Park Guard Station

DAY USE AREAS

15 Almont–Info,Picnic,River Access & seasonal camping
16 Rock Climber parking
17 North Bank–Picnic & trailhead
18 Gold Medal Fishing
19 Lakeview Overlook
20 Taylor Park Reservoir Boat Facilities
21 Bull Point
22 Timberline Overlook & Picnic
23 Rivers End Picnic
24 Pothole Reservoirs 1 & 2



Map 2

ALTERNATIVE C- PROPOSED ACTION-DISPERSED CAMPING AREAS, TRAILS, & TRAILHEADS & ROAD TREATMENTS
Taylor Loop Recreation Project

Taylor River/ Cebolla Ranger District

0 6 MI. 9 MI. 12 MI.
SCALE IN MILES

N

LEGEND

- ANALYSIS AREA BOUNDARY (APPROX. 160,000 ACRES)
- NATIONAL FOREST BOUNDARY
- WILDERNESS AREA
- 12,13 TRAILER DUMP STATION–12–WAL–MART, 13–TAYLOR PARK LAGOON
- 14 FOREST SERVICE GUARD STATION–TAYLOR PARK
- P TRAILHEAD PARKING AREAS–SEE LIST BELOW
- #428 TRAIL & TRAIL NUMBER–SEE LIST BELOW
- PROPOSED SECTIONS OF ROADS TO BE PAVED
- PROPOSED SECTIONS OF ROAD TO BE DUST ABATED
- DISPERSED CAMPING AREAS

TRAILS

#420 Deadman Gulch
#424 Doctor Park
#413 Matchless
#411 Star
#414.1 Timberline
#534 Lily Pond
#553 Cement Mtn.
#415 Bear Creek
#423 Rosebud
#549 Cameron Gulch
#428 South Lottis
#429 Henry Lake
#561 Eyre

TRAILHEAD PARKING AREAS

28 Field Branch
29 Doctor Park/Deadman
30 Matchless/ Dustin
31 Star
32 Lily Pond

Taylor Pass
Collegiate Peaks
Pothole Reservoirs 1 & 2
Italian Creek
#561
#534
#411
#414.1
Upper Taylor River
Rocky Brook
Rd. 748
Rd. 742
Spring Creek Rsvr.
Spring Creek Reservoir
Texas Creek
Rd. 755
Rd. 209
Taylor Park Reservoir
#415
#420
#423
#413
Lower Spring Creek
Cottonwood Pass
To Crested Butte
#553
Spring Creek
Rd. 744
#424
Taylor River
Rd. 765
Tin Cup
Tincup Pass Road
Mirror Lake
Tincup Pass
#428
#429
#549
Henry Lake
Rd. 813
ALMONT
To Cumberland Pass
135
Fossil Ridge
GUNNISON

III. *PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND ISSUES*

A. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

NOVEMBER 5, 1991
The first Taylor Loop Recreation Project proposal was introduced to the public on November 1, 1991, via local newspapers and radio stations. A public response form and cover letter signed by District Ranger Pam Bode dated 11/5/91 was mailed to 160 individuals and groups.

Individuals consisted of private landowners within the project area, the Gunnison County Planning Commission, High Country Citizens Alliance, Gunnison Stockgrowers Assn., Taylor Park Cattle Pool, all Outfitters and Guides within and around the project area, local businesses and resorts within the area and on the perimeter of the project area, Tincup Civic Assn., Murdie Subdivision landowners, Spring Creek Homeowners Assn., lumber companies that were working in the project area and lumber companies that have harvested timber in the area in the past, various state, federal and local agencies, Campground Hosts (52 individuals) and various individuals that use the area.

The November 5, 1991, letter informed people that unless the Forest Service heard from them, we would assume that they did not want further information and they would be removed from the mailing list. Seventy responses (44%) were received. Project alternatives were developed out of the issues and concerns brought forward from this scoping effort.

DECEMBER 19, 1991
A public open house was held at the Taylor River District Office on 12/19/91 to present and discuss alternatives and to elicit additional concerns. Eight individuals attended. Two were landowners within the project area, two were caretakers of a resort on Taylor River, two were grazing permitees, one was a business owner in Taylor Park and one was a frequent user of the area. These individuals built their own alternatives which helped the Forest Service prepare/refine the Alternative package.

DECEMBER 23, 1991
A second scoping letter dated 12/23/91 was mailed to the 70 respondents. People were asked to evaluate the five proposed alternatives. Also included in the letter were the issues and concerns generated by the first letter and the open house meeting. We received 50 responses (71%).

JANUARY 7, 1992
On 1/7/92 Forest Service Landscape Architect Sara Eichhorn met with Rosie Herman, (Rosie and her husband JD are under FS permit to operate the Taylor Park Boathouse), to explain project alternatives and to gather any additional concerns that she and JD may have had. Sara had another meeting later in February with Rosie and JD.

JUNE 4, 1992
Between January of 1992 and June of 1992, the project proposals were not actively scoped. In order to keep the public informed about the status of this project, a letter dated 6/4/92 was mailed out to all respondents. This letter talked about the current timetable for finalizing the project and explained what projects people would see implemented on-the-ground during the summer of 1992. Projects which had been funded previously and approved were being implemented within the Taylor Loop Recreation Project area.

1991 TO MARCH 1993
The District Ranger met with a large variety of individuals, groups and organizations from 1991 to early 1993.

MARCH 9, 1993
A public meeting was announced on the radio and in local newspapers for an open house at the Almont Resort on March 9, 1993. This meeting was attended by 26 individuals from the local area. They were given a briefing of the project describing the elements that were being proposed at that time.

MARCH 16, 1993
Gunnison County Commissioners conducted a public hearing to receive public comment on the Taylor Park Loop CIP project. Fifty-five people were present, including the Forest Service and members of the media. The Forest Service presented an outline for the proposal, explaining the need to upgrade the area without degrading it. A copy of the written proposal was made available.

FOREST SERVICE STEERING COMMITTEE-1992-CURRENT
A Forest Service Steering Committee was put together in the spring of 1992 to gather existing information and to refine the Proposed Action in response to issues and engineering information. Mark Schumacher is a member of the Gunnison County Planning Commission and was a committee member on behalf of Gunnison County.

B. AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED

Over 270 individuals and organizations were contacted during the development of the Taylor Loop Recreation Project. A complete listing of the individuals and groups contacted is located in the project file. The following is a list of the agencies and organizations consulted:

Agencies
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Curecanti National Recreation Area
- Colorado Division of Wildlife
- Gunnison County Planning Commission
- Gunnison County Commissioners
- City of Gunnison

Organizations
- Gunnison County Lodging Tax Panel
- Tincup Civic Association
- Gunnison County Stock Growers
- Taylor Park Cattle Pool
- Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory
- Blue Mesa Four Wheelers
- Colorado Trail Foundation
- High Country Trail Riders
- Colorado Environmental Coalition
- Gunnison Chamber of Commerce
- High Country Citizens Alliance

(Approximately 40 other organizations and businesses in the project area were contacted, including resorts and home owners associations.)

C. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

There are important environmental issues to consider in determining how best to provide improved recreation facilities and opportunities in the project area. Agencies, organizations and members of the public provided input as described above. The Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team identified and

further refined the major public and environmental issues. The following is a list of the environmental issues that are addressed in this EA:

Maintain primitive character of the area/overall levels of use and capacity

Taylor Canyon congestion and user conflicts/Livestock and visitor conflicts

Developed facilities need to be rehabilitated and brought up to health, safety and accessiblity standards

Economics, costs and benefits, and maintenance
Minimal interpretation and information exists

Resource and sanitation problems in dispersed areas around the reservoir and Taylor Park

Damage along trails and inadequate trailheads

Roads and road safety

Wetlands, riparian, flood plain, water quality, air quality and soil erosion

Vegetation, threatened and endangered plants

Wildlife, fisheries and threatened and endangered animals

Cultural resources

Lands

Tourism and community effects

Ecosystem and biodiversity

IV. *ALTERNATIVES INCLUDING THE PROPOSED ACTION*

A. ACTIONS CONSIDERED BUT DROPPED FROM FURTHER ANALYSIS

Many individual site specific project proposals were considered during the development of the proposed action and alternatives. A few of these proposals were eliminated from further analysis and consideration and are not evaluated in this environmental analysis.

Four new campgrounds were considered in Taylor Canyon: The Slot Campground, Whitewater Campground, Meadows Tent Campground, and a campground located near a timber harvest area in the canyon. These campgrounds were not carried forward to the proposed action or alternatives due to local citizen concerns expressed about effects to nearby private land in the canyon, and due to general concerns over levels of use, congestion and development in the canyon.

Construction of RV dump stations at Lottis Campground and the junction of the Cottonwood Pass and Taylor Park Road were also eliminated from further analysis and consideration.

Paving the road to Tincup was eliminated from further analysis due to lack of support from the land owners in Tincup. Paving to the existing RV dump station and sewage lagoon is a part of the proposed action to improve access and effectiveness of that facility .

Converting a portion of the Gunnison City Park day use area to camping was discussed and may still be a reasonable proposal. Because this action would occur on City of Gunnison Land, it is considered out of the scope of this project.

A proposal for a bike lane in Taylor Canyon was considered. It was concluded that the only reasonable location for a bike lane was as a part of the paved road surface. If this proposal is carried forward, it would need to be a part of the Federal Highway Administrations analysis of reconstruction of the Taylor Canyon Road and should not be a part of this analysis. A separate need for walking trails in the canyon is recognized and has been carried forward in the proposed action and alternatives.

The proposal for the construction of the remaining sections of the Gunnison Spur of the Colorado Trail was originally a part of the proposed action. This project is still being proposed but will be considered in a separate environmental analysis. The Taylor Loop recreation proposal and this proposed trail project are not dependent on one another. The Colorado Trail project was separated from this analysis to make sure that the issues specific to the trail proposal would receive full public review.

A boat launch adjacent to the Rivers End Campground was considered but eliminated after preliminary engineering analysis indicated the construction of a ramp was not practical at that location. Ramp improvements are still proposed at the existing Boat House.

B. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Table 1. describes the proposed action and three alternatives including the no action alternative. These alternatives were formed to respond to the environmental issues identified through scoping and ID team review.

1. ALTERNATIVE A - (No Action Alternative) Under this alternative few repairs would be made to existing campground and picnic facilities or to trails, roads, or interpretive signs. Environmental damage in dispersed camping areas would continue at the present rate.

2. ALTERNATIVE B - Complete campground repairs and add 37 developed sites, with developed camping emphasis in Taylor Canyon.

3. ALTERNATIVE C - (**Preferred Alternative**) Complete campground repairs and add 96 developed sites, with developed camping emphasis at Taylor Reservoir.

4. ALTERNATIVE D - Complete campground repairs and add 101 developed sites, with developed camping emphasis at Taylor Reservoir. Provide greater emphasis on campgrounds with shower and flush toilet facilities. Pave the road from Spring Creek to Taylor Canyon Road.

The kind of features, comforts, amenities, and the level of accessibiliy that will be provided at various campgrounds was also considered in the proposed action and in the alternatives. These features have been placed into three general categories or development levels: high, medium and low. Table 2 illustrates the number of developed sites that would occur at the various development levels, as proposed in each of the four alternatives.

"HIGH" sites will have the most amenities and modifications, which may include paved campground roads, electric hook-ups, flush toilets, showers, lantern posts, play areas for small children and areas for group activities. Amphitheater areas for environmental education activities are proposed at Lottis, Texas Creek, and Lakeview Campgrounds. Facilities would be designed to be operational in freezing conditions.

Accessibility level - Each facility will be made as accessible as the natural conditions will allow. All tables, fire pits, toilets, etc. at developed sites will be accessible when replaced or installed. "High" sites will generally have the greatest number of fully accessible sites. "Medium" and "Low" facilities will generally have fewer fully accessible sites than "High" category facilities.

"MEDIUM" sites may include paved campground roads, non-flush (compost or no-odor design vault toilets as appropriate), water systems (where feasible), and would be designed to be operational in freezing conditions. Lantern posts in any newly developed sites and electric hook-ups are possible. An Amphitheater and play area would be located at Lottis Creek campground.

"LOW" sites would provide non-paved roads and spurs, non-flush toilets, with water optional. Roads would be treated for dust abatement.

TABLE 1-ALTERNATIVES

	A NO ACTION	B •REHAB EXISTING •NEW 50 SITE CG AT TAYLOR RES.	C *Preferred* *Alternative* •REHAB EXISTING •SITES REDUCED IN CANYON •NEW 100 SITE CG AT TAYLOR RES. FLUSH	D •REHAB EXISTING •SITES REDUCED IN CANYON •NEW 100 SITE CG AT TAYLOR RES. •SHOWERS & TOILETS AT MORE SITES
CAMPGROUNDS				
ALMONT				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Convert to Day Use, Rehab., Add Info Site (Med.)		■ Some sites available for camping in Hunting Season	■ Some sites available for camping in Hunting Season	■ Some sites available for camping in Hunting Season
SPRING CREEK				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab. (Low)		■		
-Rehab. (Med)			■ Add Accessible Trail	■ Add Accessible Trail
GRANITE TENT (TAYLOR CANYON TENT)				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab (Med) Walk in Tent		■	■	■
NORTH BANK				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab for Horse Camping (Low)		■		
-Convert for Day Use (Med)			■	■
ONEMILE				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■	■	■	
Minor Rehab. (High)				■ Flush Toilets
ROSY LANE				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Minor Rehab. (Med.)		■ Move Fee Station, Signs	■ Move Fee Station, Signs	■ Move Fee Station, Signs
-Minor Rehab. (High)				■ Flush Toilets, Showers
LODGEPOLE				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab. (Low)		■		
-Remove & Revegetate			■	■

	A	B	C	D
COLD SPRING				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab. (Low)		■ As Tent CG		
-Remove & Revegetate			■	■
LOTTIS				
-No Action	■	■		
-New Sites & Day Facilities (Med)			■ Amphitheater, Vault Toilets or Compost	
-New Sites & Day Facilities (High)				■ Amphitheater, Flush Toilets
LAKEVIEW				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Make 2 Existing Toilets Accessible (Minor)		■	■	■
-New Sites & Day Facilities (High)			■	■
RIVERS END				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab. (Low)		■		
-Convert to Day Use (Low)			■	
-Convert to Day Use (High)				■ Flush Toilets
MIRROR LAKE				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab (Low)		■	■	
-Rehab & Add 10 Sites (Low)				■
DINNER STATION				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab. & Accessibility Trail (Low)		■	■	■
DORCHESTER				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab. (Low)		■	■	■
MOSCA				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab. & Add 5 Picnic Sites, Incorporate Group Camping		■	■	■
NEW CAMPGROUND				
TEXAS CREEK				

	A	B	C	D
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-New Construct-50 sites (High)		■		
-New Construct-85 Sites (High) -15 Tent Sites (Med)			■ Including Group Sites	■ Including Group Sites
TRAILS				
TAYLOR CANYON WALKING TRAILS (New Construction)				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■	■		
-New Construct Sections of Walking trails to Connect CGs and Existing Roadside Pulloffs and River Access			■	■
REPAIR EXISTING SUMMER TRAILS				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Repair Trails to Standard for Current Uses-72 Miles (see proposed action)		■	■	■
WINTER TRAIL WORK				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Trail Marking & Signing for Nordic & Snowmobile		■	■	■
TRAILHEAD WORK				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Construct/Reconstruct 5 Trailheads (see proposed action)		■	■	■
REC AREAS OUTSIDE OF CAMPGROUNDS				
DISPERSED CAR CAMPING AREAS				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Repair Resource Damage at Problem Campsites & Vehicle Routes. Add Public Info Brochure & Kiosks (see proposed action map #2)		■	■	■
DAY USE SITES				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehab. Existing Facilities, Add Toilets where needed (see proposed action)		■	■	■
TAYLOR RESERVOIR BOAT ACCESS				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			

	A	B	C	D
-Construct Boat Ramp/Storage and Day Use Facilities: @ Taylor Park Boat House		■	■	■
DUMP STATIONS				
-No Action-Keep Taylor Park Lagoon Dump Station	■			
-Rehab. and Add Toilet to Existing Taylor Park Sewage Lagoon Site		■	■	■
-Construct New Facility: @ Wal-Mart/City of Gunn Partnership to Add Dump			■	■
INTERPRETATION/PUBLIC INFORMATION				
-No Action-Keep Existing Signs	■			
-As proposed in Taylor Loop Interpretive Plan		■	■	■
ROADS				
TINCUP ROAD #765				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Pave to Sewage Lagoon, Dust Abate, Reconstruct 2 Bridges to Tincup		■	■	■
SPRING CREEK ROAD #744				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Pave 1/10 mile beyond Spring Creek Campground, and Dust Abate remaining length to Mosca CG -Pave 1/2 Mile of Steep Rough Section at Little Falls Bridge		■	■	
Pave Entire Length to Mosca CG				■
TAYLOR PARK ROAD #742, FROM END OF PAVEMENT TO MOSCA CAMPGROUND (VIA ROCKY BROOK ROAD #748)				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Dust Abatement from end of pavement to Junction with Rocky Brook Road only.		■	■	
-Pave All				■
EMPLOYEE HOUSING				
-No Action-Remain As Is	■			
-Rehabilitate Taylor Park Guard Station		■	■	■

TOTAL FOR PROJECT AREA

	A	B	C	D
CAMPSITES	264	298	333	339
PICNIC SITES	1	4	28	27
GRAND TOTAL	265	302	361	366

TAYLOR CANYON

	A	B	C	D
CAMPSITES				
low	63	57	12	12
medium	83	73	102	5
high	0	0	0	93
PICNIC SITES Proposed				
low	0	0	6	0
medium	0	0	5	11
high	0	0	0	0
GROUP PICNIC SHELTER Proposed				
low	1	1	0	0
medium	0	0	3	3
high	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	146	131	128	124

- Group Picnic Shelter - only 1 site exists at Gunnison City Mountain Park.

TAYLOR RESERVOIR

	A	B	C	D
CAMPSITES				
low	15	14	0	0
medium	46	46	61	61
high	0	50	100	100
PICNIC SITES Proposed				
low	0	0	6	0
medium	0	0	0	0
high	0	0	0	5
GROUP PICNIC SHELTER Proposed				
low	0	0	0	0
medium	0	0	0	0
high	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	61	110	167	166

REMOTE AREAS

	A	B	C	D
CAMPSITES				
low	58	58	58	68
medium	0	0	0	0
high	0	0	0	0
PICNIC SITES Proposed				
low	0	3	8	8
medium	0	0	0	0
high	0	0	0	0
GROUP PICNIC SHELTER Proposed				
low	0	0	0	0
medium	0	0	0	0
high	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	58	61	66	76

TABLE 2 - Comparison of the number and type of developed sites for Alternative A, B, C, & D

C. CONSISTENCY WITH LAND USE PLANS

The following land use plans were studied to determine whether the proposal and the alternatives are consistent with those plans: Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests Amended Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), the Gunnison County Land Use Plan (County Plan) and the Gunnison County Lodging Tax Panel Marketing Plan (Marketing Plan).

The proposed action and all of the alternatives are consistent with the overall management direction provided within the *Forest Plan*. The Forest Plan is being implemented as required by the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA. P.L. 93-378) and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA, P.L. 94-588). The Forest Plan provides the framework for the action proposed here, and the action is being undertaken as one step in implementing the Forest Plan. All the alternatives except the no action alternative, meet the Forest Plan Goals of meeting 50% of increased demand for developed recreation opportunities. All alternatives meet demand for dispersed recreation outside wilderness, preserving and managing cultural resources and ensuring that these resources remain available for research and education as well as for public enjoyment. They also provide the opportunity for economic growth of industries and communities dependent upon forest outputs, including tourism.

All of the alternatives conform to the Forest Plan Management Standards and Guidelines. These Standards and Guidelines are published in the Forest Plan on Pages III-9a through III-202. In addition, all alternatives are consistent with Forest Plan Management Direction and with Management Area Prescriptions. Any of the alternatives could be implemented without amending the Forest Plan.

The proposed action and all the alternatives are consistent with the *County Plan* and the Gunnison County Transportation Plan. The proposal and all alternatives, except possibly the no-action alternative, promote the intent of the Gunnison County Lodging Tax Panel Marketing Plan, which is to attract tourists oriented toward outdoor activities.

V. *ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF AREA WIDE ALTERNATIVES*

INTRODUCTION. Chapter V discusses the effects of area wide alternatives. Discussion of effects of these alternatives are organized by the issues described in Chapter III - Public Involvement and Issues. This information provides a basis for decisions to be made about the appropriate level and type of recreation facility and opportunity that should be provided in the project area. Refer to Chapter II. C. for a description of the type of decisions to be made.

A. MAINTAIN PRIMITIVE CHARACTER OF THE AREA, OVERALL LEVELS OF USE AND CAPACITY

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Taylor Canyon. Taylor Canyon is home to a mixture of ranches, homes, private and public resorts, and campgrounds. The canyon's dominant features are the Taylor River and the steep canyon walls of both open and wooded slopes. The Taylor Canyon Road is also a dominant feature of the canyon. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class of the area is Roaded Natural, (GMUG Forest Plan,1991).

Taylor Canyon and the Taylor Canyon Road receive extensive use through the summer season. Forest Service campgrounds in the canyon are often full during the end of the week and on weekends. Other day uses include fishing, rafting, picnicking, hiking and sight-seeing.

The most important element in defining capacity in the canyon and perhaps for the entire project area is the road in Taylor Canyon and its ability to handle traffic. Table 3 shows the average annual increase in traffic counts during July and August for some roads in the project area. The Cottonwood Pass site began recordings in 1987; all other sites began in 1981. This data runs through the 1992 summer season.

The greatest volume of traffic in the project area occurs in Taylor Canyon. The average annual increase in traffic in the canyon as measured at the site near the rock climbing area is 4%. The increase from 1991 to 1992 was 10.5%. Based on the historic average annual increase in traffic counts, traffic volume on Taylor Canyon Road is expected to increase 40% over a ten year period.

According to the Federal Highway Administration Reconnaissance and Scoping Report (1993), "The present road for both portions, Taylor Canyon and Cottonwood Pass, is not adequate for current traffic. Without improvements, the highway cannot satisfy future traffic demands, USFS land and resource management objectives, and Gunnison County maintenance capabilities."

		*AAG**	1992 *SADT***
Upper Cottonwood	(Located below the Pass)	10%	470
Taylor Park Guard Station		8%	476
Upper Taylor Res.	(Beyond Cottonwood Pass Road Jct)	5%	522
Road to Tincup	(Just beyond Cranors)	3%	404
Lower Taylor River	(Above Spring Creek)	4%	1126
Spring Creek Rd	(Near Intersection with Taylor Canyon Rd)	2%	225

*AAG is Average Annual Growth

**SADT is the average number of vehicles per day during the two month summer season.

TABLE 3. Traffic Data for Road Segments in the Taylor Loop Recreation Project Area

Taylor Reservoir. Taylor Reservoir and the surrounding area are dominated by open space and vistas of the reservoir and the surrounding mountains. In the vicinity of the reservoir there are summer homes, resorts with restaurants and stores, cabins for rent, and two Forest Service campgrounds. This area is also Roaded Natural in character.

The Taylor Reservoir area also gets extensive use during the summer months. The east edge of the reservoir is used by many people who drive to the water's edge to fish. It is typical to see small boats with people fishing on the reservoir. The Forest Service campgrounds are often full, particularly late in the week and on weekends. Visitors unable to find sites either occupy an overflow area at Rivers End Campground, travel down Taylor Canyon in search of a site, or drive into a dispersed area to camp. Demand for developed campsites is greater than the existing supply in this area, (GMUG Forest Plan, pg II-75).

Remote Areas. This project also addresses areas outside the immediate vicinity of Taylor Canyon and Taylor Reservoir. The Willow Creek, Upper Taylor Creek and Spring Creek drainages are more remote and primitive in character. These areas are dominated by the natural setting. The main exception to this is the Town of Tincup, which has many small cabins and historic buildings. In general the "Remote Areas" are dominated by vistas of forests, open meadows, sage hillsides, and the surrounding mountains. There are a few small Forest Service campgrounds, as well as a few summer homes, generally in proximity to the main road corridors. The areas in proximity to the main road corridors are considered Roaded Natural (Tincup Road, Upper Taylor Road, Rocky Brook Road, Spring Creek Road, and the road to Cottonwood Pass). All other areas are Semi-Primitive, or Primitive ROS class.

The "Remote Areas" receive a moderate to high level of use during the summer months. Many of the areas are used by people who are seeking a more remote and primitive setting devoid of the improvements of a campground or the impact of others camping nearby. Some people choose these areas for larger group camping such as for family reunions. Table 3. illustrates increasing road use on the road to Tincup (3%), Upper Taylor road at approximately Texas Creek (5%), and the Cottonwood Pass Road (8-10%).

Trails and areas not accessible by roads receive light to moderate use during the summer months.

ALTERNATIVE A

The no action alternative would not directly change the character of the area. However, it is anticipated that visitor use would increase over time in the area regardless of whether improvements or additions are made to campgrounds or other facilities. The decline of the primitive character of remote areas would continue due to use of poor campsites and high impact camping practices. At some point the character of the area would become less primitive, due to the presence of too many people.

The no action alternative does not meet Forest Plan direction to provide facilities to meet 50% of the increased demand in developed recreation.

ALTERNATIVE B

Taylor Canyon. Emphasis in developed recreation sites would remain primarily in Taylor Canyon although there are sites added to the Taylor Reservoir area.

Reconstruction of some facilities in Alternative B would not change the character of Taylor Canyon. Almont Campground would be converted to a day use site and forest entrance information site. Rehabilitation work to Lodgepole and North Bank Campgrounds would eliminate six campsites. This slightly reduces the capacity and use levels for camping in the canyon. The addition of campsites in

Taylor Park would increase the level of traffic on the Taylor Canyon Road beyond increases already anticipated.

Taylor Reservoir. This alternative would add a new campground at Texas Creek with 50 "high" amenity sites. The sites at Rivers End Campground would be rehabilitated as "low" amenity sites, and accessibility at Lake view Campground would be improved. Boating and day use facilities would be added at the Boat House. A small picnic and restroom facility would be added at Bull Point.

In general, Alternative B would not change the character of the area around Taylor Reservoir. Campgrounds are present in the area, as are paved roads and facilities such as a small gas station, store, restaurant, cabins for rent, and summer homes. Campgrounds and facilities such as flush toilets, pavement, or shower facilities are consistent with the character of the area, or the character of these existing facilities in the area.

"High" amenity sites would accommodate a variety of campers including those using recreational vehicles. This may cause an increase in recreational vehicles (RV's) in the area but does not introduce a new or different kind of use to the area that might change its character.

Overnight camping capacity and use of the area would be increased by the addition of 50 campsites. This additional use would not exceed the capacity of roads, trails, reservoir or other facilities or settings in the area.

Remote Areas. In this alternative, a strong emphasis remains in providing primitive camping and recreation opportunities. There would still be more primitive campsites in the project area than either high, medium, or low developed campsites.

The primitive character of remote areas would either stay the same or be improved. Some unsightly campsites and unneeded vehicle routes would be revegetated. Dispersed area camping ethics would improve lessening the visual effects from camping in unscreened areas and from inadequate disposal of human waste.

Repair and signing of trails to meet the standard for existing uses on those trails would not change their character.

Defining parking for trailheads and adding trail information boards along the Spring Creek and Rocky Brook Roads and across from Almont campground would also be consistent with the Roaded Natural setting of these areas.

The capacity of Remote Areas would remain unchanged with Alternative B. The number of dispersed campsites and vehicle routes would decrease as poor or eroded sites and routes are closed. However, it is erroneous to consider those sites as a part of the area's capacity to accommodate campers. Use should increase slightly from day visitors originating from new campsites near the reservoir, and from the general trend of increasing use that is expected over time.

ALTERNATIVE C

Taylor Canyon. Emphasis is on reducing campsites in the Canyon and providing facilities to better accommodate day use activities.

In general, Alternative C does not change the overall character of Taylor Canyon. The total number of campsites in the canyon is reduced from 146 to 114. The number of picnic sites is increased by 11 sites. Lodgepole and Cold Springs Campgrounds are closed and revegetated which may improve the visual quality in the road corridor. New campsites are added to only Lottis Creek Campground in Taylor

Canyon in this alternative. Higher amenities such as showers and flush toilets are not added to developed sites in the canyon in this alternative. Paving would be added at the North Bank site, to the new loop at Lottis Campground, and to Spring Creek Campground.

The number of campsites and use of developed sites in the canyon is reduced in this alternative. The addition of walking trails to provide improved access to the river and forested areas from developed sites may draw people and have the effect of increasing use in the canyon. Additional developed sites in Taylor Park would increase road use in the corridor. The general upward trend in use of the area would continue.

Taylor Reservoir. Developed camping emphasis shifts from the Canyon to the Taylor Reservoir area.

As with Alternative B, this alternative adds facilities to the Taylor Reservoir area that are the same or similar in character to facilities that exist there now. New camping facilities would be located in wooded areas providing screening so as to minimize visual impacts. These additions do not change the character of the area.

This alternative increases the developed site capacity by 106 sites in the reservoir area. Texas Creek Campground is constructed with 100 sites, a 15 site loop is added to Lakeview Campground and Rivers End Campground is converted to day use. Assuming full occupancy and an average of three people per site, this would increase use in the area by over 300 people per day. Although some of these people would not venture beyond the campground, many would participate in fishing, hiking, bike riding and driving, increasing use in other settings.

Remote Areas. Effects for this alternative are similar to those in Alternative B. Emphasis in the project area remains on providing primitive camping and recreation opportunities. Primitive, undeveloped campsites are more numerous than either high, medium, or low developed sites.

The character of the areas should be either unchanged or improved. The capacity of these areas is unchanged, but use would increase as a continuing trend. Use increases to a greater degree than in Alternative B because there are more campsites constructed near the reservoir in this alternative, bringing more people to remote areas.

ALTERNATIVE D

Taylor Canyon. Emphasis on developed campsites shifts to the Taylor Reservoir area. Development level of campsites shifts from low and medium to high.

Alternative D reduces the number of campsites in the canyon from 146 to 110, and increases picnic sites by 11 sites. Flush toilets and showers are added to One Mile, Rosy Lane and Lottis Campgrounds. Paving is added at North Bank, the new loop in Lottis Campground, and Spring Creek Campground. These facilities are consistent with other facilities found in the canyon, including summer homes and resorts.

This alternative does not change the character of the canyon. As a result of increased sites in the reservoir area, traffic in the canyon would increase.

As with Alternative C, use may increase as a result of adding walking trails to the canyon.

Taylor Reservoir. As with Alternative C, developed campground emphasis shifts to the reservoir area. In addition to the changes outlined in Alternative C, this alternative would also add flush toilets at Rivers End. Alternative D adds facilities that are consistent to those that are currently found in the area and

do not of themselves change the character of the area. Continuing paving past Rivers End Campground does introduce paving to new areas and may make this end of the reservoir appear less primitive.

One hundred and five sites are added to the reservoir area, with the potential of adding an estimated 315 people.

Remote Areas. As with the other alternatives, a strong emphasis remains for providing primitive and semi-primitive camping and recreation opportunities. The character of the areas should be either unchanged or improved. The developed site capacity of these areas would be increased slightly by adding ten additional sites at Mirror Lake Campground. Use would increase as a continuing trend. There are more campsites constructed near the reservoir in this alternative than in Alternative B, therefore use would be increased in the remote areas to a greater degree than in Alternative B and the same as in Alternative C.

The addition of paving to the Spring Creek/Rocky Brook/Taylor Park Road loop would introduce paving to large areas where it does not now exist. This would make these areas less primitive in character.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Reconstruction of the Taylor Canyon and Cottonwood Pass road could begin as early as 1997. According to the FHA Reconnaissance and Scoping Report (1993), "The route should be designed with forest visitors and local residents in mind and should be unobtrusive. A key issue with the public, the USFS, and Gunnison County is that improvements minimize the width of construction activities and maintain the existing outstanding scenic quality and rural character of the route. It is suggested that the route be designed as a 'Parkway', implementing special means to ensure that a high quality, low impact, safe, functional, and visually stimulating product results". The effect of this action is to maintain the character of the canyon, while repairing the road to accommodate current and projected future use.

Summer homes and cabins are appearing in increasing numbers particularly in Spring Creek and in Taylor Park. The new construction in remote areas is likely to diminish the primitive character of those areas.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATION: Alternatives B, C & D

If the timing of project funding allows additions will be implemented to developed site capacity in the project area after repairs to the Taylor Canyon Road have been made.

B. TAYLOR CANYON CONGESTION AND USER CONFLICTS. LIVESTOCK/VISITOR CONFLICTS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

There are a number of uses that occur within Taylor Canyon during the summer months. The following is a listing of the major activities and uses in the canyon: camping, hiking, fishing, rafting and kayaking, horse back riding, resort and summer home use, cattle drives, sight-seeing or driving for pleasure, through traffic of log trucks, visitors to Taylor Park, and Gunnison to Buena Vista traffic. It is typical during the summer months for all these activities to occur at the same time.

The conflicts that exist fall into two general categories: those that are associated with the road and those that occur off the Taylor Canyon Road. Conflicts on the road are a result of the volume and the mix of users who travel at different speeds. Cattle are the slowest travelers, large motor homes, sightseers and people looking for campgrounds or fishing spots travel faster than cattle, and most through traffic and commercial traffic is generally the fastest. Differing speeds on the road can create both congestion and conflict at times.

Some of the conflicts occurring off the road include: rafters and kayakers using the river conflict with some fishermen, noise from rafting which disturbs peace and quiet for some campers and summer home residents, smell and flies from the cattle drive which detracts from the experience of some campers and visitors disrupting the cattle operation moving in the canyon.

Livestock and Visitor Conficts. Most of the Taylor Loop Project is located within the Taylor Park Livestock Grazing Allotment. Taylor Park Allotment includes the south side of Taylor River from One Mile Campground up to and including all of Taylor Park itself. The Spring Creek Watershed is included in the Spring Creek Allotment.

Conflict to date has been the mixing of livestock with recreationists. Some people do not want livestock in or around where they recreate, while others see livestock as mixing with the Old West. People either do not like livestock where they camp and eat or do not like flies that are associated with livestock dung. Most conflicts with the developed sites have been mitigated in Taylor Canyon by fencing the campgrounds.

Other opportunities for livestock and recreationists to meet is in dispersed use on trails or fishing. Potential safety problems are almost nil as cattle would move away from people. Most complaints seem to originate from those staying at campgrounds and picnic sites.

ALTERNATIVE A

Congestion and user conflicts would continue and in some cases increase with Alternative A. As the trend of increasing use continues, pressures on the road would worsen. Congestion and conflicts off the road may also worsen. They may also improve as a result of attempts to reduce some of the user conflicts, such as recently established limitations on commercial rafting launch times.

Livestock and Visitor Conflicts. Over time we expect to see conflicts increase as visitor use increases within the project area. The Taylor Canyon is the area with most contact between a large number of people and livestock of the Taylor Park Allotment as livestock are driven up and down the canyon to and from the higher range. Traffic counts show a steady increase in traffic over the years, and as this continues, more people would come into contact with the livestock.

ALTERNATIVES B, C & D

As with Alternative A, the ongoing trend toward increasing congestion would continue. This trend is accelerated by adding camping sites to the project area. This would draw more people through the canyon for accessing the increased number of sites established near the reservoir. This effect would be greater for Alternatives C and D as the number of sites in the project area is increased to a greater degree in these alternatives. Establishing or converting sites to day use in the canyon should reduce congestion by providing locations for day use picnicking activities to occur where there is safe vehicle access to the highway.

Completing work on existing fishing access points and roadside pull-offs to improve safety, sight distance, and grades would reduce congestion in the canyon. This would improve opportunities for slow moving vehicles to pull over and allow more efficient ingress and egress to river access points along the highway.

Walking trails are proposed in Alternatives C and D, in association with existing developed sites in the canyon. These may reduce vehicular congestion by providing opportunities for campers to recreate without the need to drive a vehicle from the campground to a different location, i.e. a trailhead.

Improving access onto the highway at the Almont Campground site would also reduce congestion. Conversion of all or part of the sites to day use at Almont would also decrease conflicts from day users tying up established campsites.

Conflicts that occur on the road, (cattle, recreationists, log trucks), could be increased slightly as a result of increased camper traffic. This effect would be greatest with Alternatives C and D.

Traffic and congestion in the canyon would also increase temporarily as a result of construction activity.

Livestock and User Conflicts. Traffic through the canyon to the park could increase with the increase of camp units in the Taylor Park. With the increase in traffic, more cars would be mixing with livestock as they move between One Mile and Lottis Creek; the possibility of accidents would probably increase.

C. DEVELOPED FACILITIES NEED TO BE REHABILITATED AND BROUGHT UP TO HEALTH, SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS.
ECONOMICS, COST/BENEFIT, AND MAINTENANCE
MINIMAL INTERPRETATION AND INFORMATION

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The developed facilities in the project area were originally constructed during the early 1960's. Many of these campgrounds have broken fire grates, tables and parking barriers, unlevel sites, inaccessible restrooms and campsites and roads and spurs that don't meet standards for vehicles today. Only One Mile, Rosy Lane, Lottis, and Lakeview Campgrounds have been recently rehabilitated and are in good condition.

The Forest Service currently maintains the facilities in the project area using appropriated funds in combination with a strong volunteer work force. In recent years this has been sufficient for the fundamental work of cleaning restrooms, fire grates, and campsites, pumping vaults, picking up trash, collecting fees, law enforcement, operating water systems, and completing some campground repairs. This has not been sufficient to complete the more extensive work to upgrade the campground to health, safety and accessibility standards, as these standards have changed over time.

There are a few interpretive signs in the project area. These signs are scattered throughout the project area. They provide only minimal information about the natural and cultural history of the area. Information about recreation opportunities is also minimal and limited to crude brochures made in the local district office, and personal contacts made at the district office and in the campgrounds by campground hosts. Information and interpretation activities are rarely provided.

ALTERNATIVE A

Deficiencies in the campgrounds and other facility health, safety and accessibility would remain the same or continue to decline with time.

Some campgrounds may eventually need to be closed if repairs aren't made. In Alternative A, continuing to operate facilities as in the past has a high positive benefit to cost ratio. This reflects that little investment is made to keep the facilities up-to-date and in working condition, outside of the basic cleaning and painting type of maintenance work.

Information and interpretation services would remain the same.

ALTERNATIVE B, C & D

Deficiencies in campgrounds and other facilities would be improved. Health, safety and accessibility needs would be met in all developed sites in the project area. Walking trails proposed in Alternatives C and D would improve accessibility in and around developed sites in Taylor Canyon.

The benefit to cost ratio is positive for Alternatives B, C and D. This ratio becomes smaller in Alternatives B, C and D respectively, as more costly work and improvements are included in the alternatives. Total cost to implement Alternative B would be $12.2 million, Alternative C would cost $15.3 million and the cost to implement Alternative D is $24.5 million. Cost to the Forest Service would be less than these totals as partnerships and investments by the private sector would cover some of the cost. This could result in costs to the Forest Service being reduced by as much as $3.9 million in Alternatives C and D. The opportunity for private investment is not as great in Alternative B so total cost to the Forest Service for this Alternative could not be reduced as much as in Alternatives C and D.

Funding for this project is likely to be spread over a five to ten year or longer time span. It is possible that the alternative selected would be funded in part, requiring a prioritization of individual projects during the implementation phase. Even though a decision may be made to select an alternative, some individual projects within the alternative may not receive funding.

Opportunities for the private sector to design, build, and operate Texas Creek Campground would be investigated.

Information and interpretation would be improved in these alternatives. Adding rustic outdoor amphitheaters provides a setting for evening campfire programs and family educational programs.

D. RESOURCE AND SANITATION PROBLEMS IN DISPERSED AREAS AROUND THE RESERVOIR AND PARK

EXISTING CONDITIONS

In the remote areas of the park and Spring Creek, new vehicle routes have been created as individuals push further in search of secluded fishing or camping spots. Often these routes parallel existing routes or are in poor locations, resulting in unnecessary loss of soil and vegetation. Many sites have been established in riparian areas, causing damage to vegetation, soils, water quality and wildlife habitat. Routes and campsites have been established in open areas without screening to roads or other sites, thereby impacting the primitive character for visitors. Many of these same conditions existed in the vicinity of the reservoir until recent years when many of the unneeded routes were closed and rehabilitated. Some areas have greater impacts from larger groups camping. This activity enlarges the impacts of existing sites, increasing vegetation and soil loss.

Sanitation problems do exist around the reservoir as well as in these remote areas. This problem is caused by concentrated use where restrooms do not exist and use by individuals who are not informed about how to dispose of human waste in a remote setting.

ALTERNATIVE A

Resource and sanitation problems would continue and worsen as use increases over time.

ALTERNATIVE B,C & D

Resource and sanitation problems could increase as a result of additional people using the area from the additional campsites in the vicinity of the reservoir and from the general tendency of increasing use. This tendency would be offset and resource and sanitation problems should be reduced as a result of closing poor vehicle routes and campsites and through improved visitor information and education efforts in dispersed areas.

There may also be a reduced impact to resources in remote areas as increased developed campground capacity accommodates campers who used dispersed areas because sites were not available in campgrounds. New sites in campgrounds designed to accommodate large groups may draw a small portion of this existing use from remote areas and reduce impacts in those areas.

E. DAMAGE ALONG TRAILS, INADEQUATE TRAILHEADS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

There are over one hundred miles of trail in the project area. In general these trails contain inadequate drainage and have sections that are overgrown. In some places secondary or braided trails have formed from people trying to avoid rough or wet areas. Wet boggy conditions exist on sections of trail, and rock culverts or turnpikes are needed to keep traffic on the trail and to minimize impacts. Where switchbacks occur, they are generally eroded or have been shortcut. Signs are broken or missing on many trails.

Some trails in the project area, such as the Timberline Trail from Garden Basin to Texas Creek, have received repair work in recent years and are in good condition.

Winter trails and trailheads are marked in only a few areas.

Trailheads in some areas have inadequate parking, particularly for vehicles with trailers. Trailhead information does not exist in most cases.

ALTERNATIVE A

Erosion would continue; water quality would be diminished. The recreation experience would be negatively affected by trails that are damaged, overgrown and difficult to travel in some locations.

Winter trails would continue to have markings in only a few areas.

Some trailheads would still not accommodate enough space for vehicles with trailers.

ALTERNATIVE B, C & D

Trail erosion would be reduced by repairs. The recreation setting would be improved by trail repairs, clearer signing and trail marking, and improved parking to accommodate vehicles including those with horse trailers.

Use and trail ethics information would be present at all trailheads.

Repairing trails to meet the standards to accommodate existing uses should not encourage uses that do not occur on those trails now.

F. ROADS AND SAFETY

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Roads. The roads in the TLRP consist of the following road segments: the paved Taylor Canyon Road, the Spring Creek Road (paved and gravel), and the gravel surfaced Rocky Brook, Willow Creek and Upper Taylor Canyon Roads. The remainder of the roads are native surface and range from passenger car to ones that require high clearance or 4X4 vehicles. The roads are used by a mix of vehicles including motor homes, log trucks, passenger cars and trucks, bicycles and pedestrians. Taylor Canyon and Cottonwood Pass Roads are currently being evaluated for reconstruction by the Federal Highway Administration with input from the County, Forest Service and the public. It is intended that this reconstruction would not change the character of the roads.

Safety. Accidents do occur on the improved roads. Hazards include dust from vehicles on gravel roads that obscure the vision of other drivers; bicyclists and walkers being in close proximity to faster moving vehicles (this is primarily in Taylor Canyon); people parking on the travel way to view wildlife or scenery and impede traffic (this is primarily in Taylor Canyon); steep gravel roads that become washboarded and dusty causing people to lose control of their vehicles (this is primarily on the Cottonwood Pass and Spring Creek Roads); and hazards from logging trucks meeting recreation vehicles on narrow roads.

ALTERNATIVE A

Roads. Alternative A would allow washboards and excessive airborne dust to continue. Increased traffic on primary travel routes would result in increased demands for additional maintenance by Gunnison County on county roads and Forest Service roads. The Forest Service and the County can enter into project agreements where specific projects are needed for travel safety or comfort. Current needs exceed funding capabilities of both the Forest Service and the County.

Safety. Current safety hazards involving mixing fast and slow vehicles would continue. Dusty gravel roads would continue to be a hazard as well as an inconvenience. People stopping within the travel ways in Taylor Canyon would continue to be a hazard until the road is reconstructed and safe turnouts are constructed. Even with construction some visitors would continue to stop in the roadway to view wildlife and scenery. The amount of traffic is expected to increase regardless of the alternative selected and would result in increased accidents.

ALTERNATIVE B, C & D

Roads. Any recreation facility improvement work that makes the area more attractive to visitors would have a direct effect on the amount of use the roads receive. Improvements that are more attractive to motorhomes would increase the use of roads by these vehicles. Use by heavy vehicles would increase the potential for damage to roads but is not judged to be significant in relation to the total amount of traffic on the roads in the project area.

The amount of dust abatement treatment required by all alternatives except for A may be difficult to sustain over a long time period, due to limited funding. If the County and Forest Service do keep up with road maintenance needs on the primary routes, it would likely result in less maintenance work being done on secondary roads. Some people perceive the Taylor Canyon as being crowded already,

no matter how smooth or rough the road surface may be. This perhaps is due to traffic when slower moving vehicles are looking for places to fish, camp, watch wildlife, etc. and other travelers just want to get to their destinations as quickly as possible. Several pull-off picnic sites, watchable wildlife areas and parking lots for Taylor River fishing access have recently been designed to give travelers the option of pulling over to park and enjoy the river or to pull over to let people get by safely.

Safety. An increase in the amount of accidents can be expected with increased traffic, related to recreation facility construction or reconstruction. The Federal Highway Administration Reconnaissance and Scoping Report judges the current Taylor Canyon Road (FH 59) to be "not adequate for current traffic". A study of the opportunities to cure some of the road's inadequacies without changing its character is underway. This work could begin as soon as 1997.

G. WATER QUALITY, AIR QUALITY AND SOIL CONCERNS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Water quality within the Taylor River Drainage has been tested by various agencies and groups including the Water Conservancy District. Lynn Cudlip, who oversaw some of this data collection, stated that the only problem found in water quality was in the East and Gunnison Rivers. In early spring, nitrate levels increase in the Gunnison River just below the Town of Almont. This could be associated with septic systems during soil saturation and high water table. Continued increase in dispersed use near water could lead to some site specific water quality problems if use grows and people continue to urinate and defecate near the water.

Air Quality in the Taylor River area is affected regionally from the prevailing wind patterns from the west and southwest. Population centers in Arizona, California and the Four Corners area effect our air quality. Locally, air quality is affected by what is occurring in the Grand Valley and the Gunnison Valley. The Collegiate Peaks Wilderness is a Class Two Airshed. This Wilderness does require the maintenance of air quality to prevent detrimental effects to the wilderness character.

The project area consists of narrow canyons, high mountains, and broad flat basins. Each area is unique in the local weather conditions that affect air quality. The mountains are almost always affected by winds which lead to quick dissipation of any air quality problems. The canyons during the summer days are affected by local drainage winds that keep air moving and prevent any stagnation of air. Calm evenings with no wind can exacerbate dust and smoke problems in localized areas such as Spring Creek where road dust is a problem. During the fall and winter the canyons are commonly affected by inversions where sources of air pollution can cause problems. Past wildland fires within the canyon have led to areas of the canyon filling with smoke. Campfires within the canyon have not created any problems to the point of campground hosts or campers complaining of smoke.

Due to its bowl shape, Taylor Park is susceptible to inversions. During the summer, inversions of up to several hundred feet have been noted. In the winter these inversions may stagnate in depths greater than a 1000 ft and last for long periods of time. Due to the limited amount of development and use of Taylor Park, the air quality as related to visibility remains high.

Soils within this project area are underlain by granite, gneiss, schist, sandstone, shale, and limestone. Areas underlain by granite are the most extensive. Soils on 40 to 65 percent slopes are susceptible to erosion. Campgrounds and dispersed sites are located on much gentler slopes where erosion can be more easily controlled.

Lower Taylor River is an extremely rocky stream; these large rocks protect stream banks from cutting. This natural hardness in conjunction with controlled flows coming from Taylor Park Reservoir make for

extremely stable banks. Some sites associated with campgrounds have some small erosion problems caused by fisherman access.

Upper Taylor River, unlike Lower Taylor River, does not have the large rock, and its stream banks are much more susceptible to erosion. Fishing access can contribute to bank destabilization when stream-side vegetation is removed. This causes the bank to widen and the channel depth to decrease.

ALTERNATIVE A

Increased traffic with Alternative A is not sufficient to cause an effect on air quality. Campfire use within the area is also insufficient to cause a change in air quality.

Continued increasing use may lead to more areas being affected by fishing access. As people walk along the edge of the river, vegetation is trampled reducing the effectiveness of that vegetation to hold the stream bank during high flows. Texas Creek has much more rock than Upper Taylor River but is still susceptible to the same impacts. Willow Creek has more medium and tall willows that prevent people from walking the edge of the stream.

ALTERNATIVE B

Under this alternative some toilets would be located at various high use sites within the project area such as the Pothole Reservoirs. The addition of toilet facilities in these areas would reduce the amount of human waste around these sites. This reduction of human waste should reduce the potential of water quality problems that are currently occurring without these toilets.

Air quality would not have a significant change with the implementation of this proposal. Under the no action alternative there is potential to produce 35.7 tons of carbon monoxide. Under this alternative the potential of an additional 5.94 tons of carbon monoxide produced would not have an effect within this Class II Airshed.

Under this alternative any ground disturbance would follow best management practices for stabilizing disturbed areas. These practices would control flows on disturbed sites and prevent sediment from moving into the water system. Maintenance of existing trails would be completed to control and reduce erosion.

Under this alternative no change would be made in areas where heavy fishing access currently exists. Additional bank degredation may occur along the most popular fishing reaches. Effects from this alternative would not significantly change from the no action alternative.

ALTERNATIVE C

Water quality effects would not be any different than Alternative B. Water quality would remain high, with all new development having proper waste water control systems.

Air quality should remain the same as Alternative A or B. With the addition of 96 developed sites, we could expect a maximum increase of 8.37 tons of carbon monoxide over the no action alternative.

This alternative should see a decrease in soil erosion along Taylor River. The heavily used sites near and between campgrounds are improved with access trails along the river. This would allow the healing of many spots where people access the river down steep slopes. During construction of these trails, erosion control practices would be used to prevent sediment from entering the river.

ALTERNATIVE D

Water quality would remain high with the same effects as in Alternative C.

Air quality would not change significantly. A maximum of 8.4 tons of additional carbon monoxide could be produced per year over the no action alternative.

Effects to soils would be the same as Alternative C.

H. VEGETATION (RIPARIAN/WETLANDS), TEP&S PLANTS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Currently recreation is concentrated near or along streams or lakes within the project area with the exception of Lakeview Campground. In general, access to water is left for people to find on their own. This has resulted in many places where people have made access by either sliding down steep banks to the water's edge or developing routes along the water's edge. Most of these unmanaged routes result in soil disturbance and trampling of vegetation. Continuing to allow uncontrolled access degrades these riparian areas. This allows some bank erosion to occur, increasing sediment into the streams and lakes. Riparian vegetation in these areas could decrease if people continue to pioneer new access routes. The net effect can be poorer aquatic habitat.

ALTERNATIVE A

Within the project area the potential exists for one proposed plant species, Alpine Fen Mustard, *Eutrema penlandii*. Several candidate and sensitive plant species could exist within the project area. (See Appendix B.) Due to the fact that these developments and use areas have been used for several decades, any effect would most likely have already happened. There is not expected to be any effect from this alternative that would move any of these species towards listing as Endangered or Threatened. See the Taylor Park Loop Biological Evaluation For Plants, for details about species and the potential effects.

The existing conditions in riparian areas would continue, with damage occurring due to uncontrolled access.

The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest Management Plan has identified portions of Taylor Park as suitable timber for harvest. With no change there should be no effect upon commercial timber harvest.

ALTERNATIVE B

Construction or reconstruction projects have minor influence on wetlands or riparian areas. Visitor impacts to dispersed riparian areas should be reduced as vehicle roads and campsites in riparian areas are closed. The trail system, which would receive needed maintenance, resulting in less impact to wetlands and riparian areas.

Under this proposed action the influence visitors have to wetlands and riparian areas along Lower Taylor River could be reduced. Currently with no designed access to the River people pioneer their own trails, some sliding down steep banks or trampling shoreline vegetation as they access the river. With the development of access trails to the river near concentrated use areas people would avoid sliding down steep banks, less trampling of vegetation would occur with planned access. Some vegetation would be lost to new trails but sites that are more delicate can be avoided.

With the improvement of existing trails within the project area we might see the possibility of an increase in trail use. This increase in trail use has potential to increase the risk to some sensitive plants if they exist. Before any construction occurs site specific survey for sensitive plants would be done to see if they occur. If any sensitive plants occur they would be protected from any effects from trail location. If a high probability exists for indirect effects from people leaving the trail system a protection plan would be developed, with consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Under this alternative one campground would be constructed in what is currently classified as part of the Suitable Timber Base area. The amount of acres is so small as not to affect the Allowable Sale Quantity.

ALTERNATIVE C

Under this proposed action the minor influence to wetlands and riparian areas along Lower Taylor River could be reduced. Currently, with no designed access to the river, people pioneer their own trails, some sliding down steep banks or trampling shoreline vegetation as they access the river. With the development of access trails to the river, people would avoid sliding down steep banks and less trampling of vegetation would occur. Some vegetation would be lost, to new trails, but sites that are more delicate can be avoided.

Visitor impacts to dispersed riparian areas should be reduced as vehicle routes and campsites in riparian areas are closed.

Creation of wetlands using treated waste water from showers and flush systems is a possibility in Alternative B, C and D. The feasibility of creation of wetlands will be evaluated during the design process.

Effects to Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Sensitive plants would be no different than in Alternative B.

Effects to the availability of timber for harvest would also be the same as Alternative B.

ALTERNATIVE D

Effects to vegetation (Riparian/wetlands), TEP&S plants and commercial timber should be the same as in Alternative C.

I. WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, T&E SPECIES

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Due to the large size of the project analysis area, a great variety of wildlife species are present. Small mammals include squirrels, rabbits, marmot, mice, chipmunks, porcupine, and beaver. Carnivores including weasels, pine marten, mountain lion, coyote, fox, and an occasional black bear are present. Birds including grouse, waterfowl, songbirds, woodpeckers, and raptors are also in the project area. The Taylor Park Loop analysis area is used by big game species including elk, mule deer, and bighorn sheep. In addition, several moose that were introduced much farther south (over 65 miles away) on the Rio Grande National Forest have been found in Taylor Park the past two years. Higher elevations constitute summer through fall big game ranges, mid-elevations are important spring and calving and fawning ranges, and the low elevation ranges are key big game winter ranges. Important big game winter ranges are located adjacent to the project area in the Almont Triangle (an area delineated by Highway 135, Taylor Canyon Road, and Jack's Cabin Road) and on south-facing slopes southeast of

the Almont Triangle. The steep slopes northwest of Taylor Park Reservoir are an important bighorn sheep lambing area.

Fishery resources in the project analysis area include rainbow and brown trout in the Taylor River; Snake River cutthroat trout, lake trout, rainbow, brown trout, kokanee samon, and northern pike in Taylor Park Reservoir; and a variety of rainbow, brook, brown, and cutthroat trout in the many creeks and lakes of the project area. The Colorado Division of Wildlife regularly stocks fish in most of the waters of the project area.

The Endangered bald eagle is present in the Gunnison Basin from approximately mid-October through the end of March or early April. Many of these bald eagles migrate through the area during the spring and fall. Others are winter residents and may stay until spring. The project analysis area is used by bald eagles although most of the eagles migrate out of the area once water sources freeze over. No bald eagle nesting occurs in the project area but for the first time since 1958, one pair of bald eagles successfully nested and raised young along the East River in 1993, just outside of the project area. Most bald eagle use in the project area is concentrated along Taylor River.

Other Endangered species that may use the project area include the peregrine falcon, whooping crane, and Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly. Currently the peregrine falcon is most likely a spring and fall migrant. No Known breeding peregrine falcons are in the project analysis area. Migrating peregrine falcons are likely to use river corridors and other riparian habitats in the project analysis area while passing through. A few whooping cranes migrate through the Taylor River and Cebolla Ranger District with sandhill cranes in spring and fall. Flocks of cranes are often seen flying overhead but rarely land. Use of the project area by whooping cranes is likely to be rare. If cranes do land, they would be found in marshy areas along rivers and lakes, or in open foraging areas such as pastures and parks. The Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly has known breeding colonies in the San Juan Mountains and may also be present in the project analysis area. Habitat for this butterfly is snow willow (*Salix reticulata nivalis*) patches at elevations above 12,000 feet.

There are four Endangered fish species that are influenced by minor water depletions in the Upper Colorado River Basin; the Colorado squawfish, razorback sucker, bonytail chub, and humpback chub. Although these fish are not present on the Taylor River and Cebolla Ranger District, water sources in the Taylor Loop project analysis area are considered tributaries and sources of the Colorado River; therefore, water depletion in the project area affects these Endangered fish. Mitigation measures identified by the US Fish and Wildlife Service as "reasonable and prudent alternatives" to avoid the likelihood of jeopardy to the Endangered fish species are currently being implemented.

There are no Threatened or Proposed (species proposed for listing as Threatened or Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) Species in the Taylor Park Loop project analysis area.

Sensitive Species are those identified by the Forest Service Regional Forester as "those...for which population viability is a concern, as evidenced by...significant current or predicted downward trends in population numbers or density..." or "significant current or predicted downward trends in habitat capability that would reduce a species' existing distribution." (Forest Service Manual 2670.5). Sensitive Species that may be present in the project analysis area include the following:

Mammals	*Birds*	*Fish*	*Amphibians/Reptiles*
Pine marten Ringtail Lynx Wolverine Dwarf shrew Pygmy shrew Townsend's big-eared bat	Merlin Osprey Northern goshawk Ferruginous hawk Boreal owl Flammulated owl Greater sandhill crane Three-toed woodpecker Golden-crowned kinglet Purple martin Pygmy nuthatch Loggerhead shrike Olive-sided flycatcher Fox sparrow Black swift	Colorado cutthroat trout	Tiger salamander Boreal western toad Northern leopard frog

Although some of these Sensitive Species have not been positively confirmed to be present in the project analysis area, suitable habitat conditions do exist to support these species. For this reason, the potential effects of the four project alternatives would be evaluated as if all these species were present in the analysis area. For a short description of each of these Sensitive Species' habitat needs, please see Appendix B.

Current visitor use and enjoyment of wildlife in the Taylor Loop project analysis area includes high levels of hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Currently, recreation-related activities that impact wildlife include hunting and fishing, high levels of traffic in Taylor Canyon and Lower Spring Creek Canyon that disrupt migration patterns of big game (elk, bighorn sheep and deer), disturbance caused by intensive recreation activities in some areas by high numbers of visitors including camping, river rafting, trail and road use (hikers, bicyclists, motorcyclists, ATVers, snowmobilers, skiers), and use of rental cabins and lodges, trading posts/stores, restaurants, trailer parks, private homes and vacation cabins; and water depletion that results from current water use for residential homes, ranching operations, campgrounds, a dump station, sewer ponds, business use by restaurants, trading posts/stores, etc., and household use by trailer parks, rental cabins and lodges.

ALTERNATIVE A

Visitor use is expected to continue to increase over time even if the proposed recreation projects are not implemented. Increased visitor use would mean more people hunt (although numbers of hunters may increase in the project analysis area, the number of permits given out to harvest animals is regulated by the Colorado Division of Wildlife to manage wildlife population sizes; numbers of animals harvested may or may not increase with time.), fish, view wildlife, camp, raft, drive vehicles, hike, and use businesses in the project area. Increased visitor use, whether in site specific locations or cumulatively in the overall Taylor Loop project analysis area, would have similar effects on wildlife, fish, Endangered, and Sensitive Species. Most of the increased visitor use would occur in areas that are already being used at fairly high levels. Wildlife are most likely already avoiding these areas of high use or have learned to adapt to human activities. Opportunities for wildlife viewing in areas that already have high recreation use (including Taylor Canyon and Lower Spring Creek Canyon), are not expected to change much with increased visitor use. Wildlife in these areas have adapted to the current high levels of human use. If visitor use increases in areas that are not currently being used often by people, wildlife may be displaced or disturbed when people are present. In general however, many birds, amphibians, reptiles,

fish, and mammals (including most of the Sensitive Species) live their lives undisturbed by the pressure of humans. A few Sensitive Species (goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, and wolverine) are bothered by human presence and avoid areas of high visitor use. Wildlife viewing opportunities are still expected to remain high in these areas as well. Increased traffic in Taylor Canyon and Lower Spring Creek Canyon would continue to disrupt elk and bighorn sheep migration routes.

Fishing pressure would most likely increase with increased numbers of visitors. The Colorado Division of Wildlife may decide to increase fish stocking rates to accommodate increased numbers of anglers. If there is no increase in fish stocking rates, angler fishing success may decline. Damage to shorelines of creeks and lakes caused by angler use may increase, leading to less healthy fish habitat caused by sedimentation and loss of fish cover under streambanks.

No effects to the Endangered peregrine falcon, whooping crane, or Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly are expected since people do not influence their breeding, feeding, or resting habitat. Bald eagles are present in the analysis area in the fall and winter when the high visitor use season is over. They may be temporarily disturbed by visitors, but as is currently the case, they often move a short distance away or return to the area soon after people leave.

Cumulative Affects

Cumulatively in the analysis area, water use is expected to increase as additional home building occurs on private land and as businesses and Forest Service campgrounds respond to increasing visitor use. Changes may be made in livestock and ranching operations on private lands, creating either an increase or decrease in water use. Increases in water use in the Upper Colorado River Basin result in water depletion in the Lower Colorado River which negatively affects the four Endangered Colorado River fish species. The Forest Service would comply with mitigation measures identified as "reasonable and prudent alternatives" in the Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for this action for the four Endangered Colorado River fish species.

Mitigation-Needed with Alternative A.

If a breeding site of a Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or Sensitive Species is located, provide a buffer zone and/or a seasonal use restriction around the site to minimize disturbance from recreation sites or activities.

The Forest Service would comply with mitigation measures identified as "reasonable and prudent alternatives" in the Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for this action for the four Endangered Colorado River fish species.

ALTERNATIVE B, C, AND D

The recreation improvement projects proposed in Alternatives B, C, and D all have similar effects on wildlife, fish, Endangered, and Sensitive Species. Although potential habitat exists for the Endangered Uncompahgre fritillary butterfly in the Taylor Park Loop project analysis area, recreation projects proposed in Alternatives B,C, and D would not affect this species. None of the proposed projects would occur in this butterfly's habitat (snow willow patches above 12,000 feet elevation). The effects described for wildlife in this section include effects on Endangered and Sensitive Species.

Construction projects in the analysis area would require that some trees be cut down. This would remove some potential trees for wildlife. However, plenty of trees and forested habitat remain in the specific project locations as well as throughout the project analysis area. Many trees useful to wildlife will be retained. This includes trees near water that are dead or have dead tops.

Noise from construction activities may temporarily cause wildlife to avoid a localized area. It is expected that wildlife would quickly return after construction activities cease. One exception to this is in the proposed new Texas Creek Campground location. Because a new campground would be constructed, there would be some loss of available habitat for some wildlife. This is a minor loss, however, due to the relatively small acreage of the proposed campground and the availability of a large amount of similar habitat nearby that remains (open parkland sagebrush and lodgepole pine forest). Wildlife viewing opportunities would temporarily decrease in localized areas during construction activities. Viewing opportunities would resume soon after construction activities cease as wildlife return to the area.

Construction of the new Texas Creek Campground (with 50-100 campsites) would bring people into a new concentrated use area. For some species (big game for example), this new source of human activity would cause them to avoid the area. Because most of the visitor use in the campground and surrounding area is during the summer season, wildlife avoidance of the area would be highest during the summer. When visitor use is low during the fall through spring, wildlife avoidance of the area would be lessened. Many other species, however, would not be kept away by the new campground. Some species are not likely to use the site currently. Other species are not bothered by human presence and would remain in the area. Such species include songbirds, small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles. The only Sensitive Species likely to avoid the new Texas Creek Campground during high use periods are the goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, and wolverine. However, current use of the Texas Creek Campground site by these four species is considered unlikely. Wildlife viewing in the Texas Creek Campground site and surrounding area is likely to remain high. Although some species may avoid the area, many other species are expected to remain. Fishing pressure in Texas Creek and the other small creeks close to the new campground site may increase with new visitor use. Fish habitat conditions may decline somewhat with increased fishing as angler use creates new trails along creek shorelines, causing some vegetation loss, soil compaction, and erosion.

The recreation facilities themselves and additional campground loops that would be constructed in existing campgrounds and in the new Texas Creek Campground are not expected to affect most fish and wildlife. Proposed campsites, toilets, showers, water systems, buildings, play equipment, fences, picnic pavilions, amphitheaters, etc., would be located in areas of high visitor use. Wildlife species are currently avoiding these high visitor use areas already or are adapted to human recreation activities. An exception to this is when the construction of facilities occurs in riparian areas. Riparian areas are important habitat for wildlife, and wildlife use is concentrated in these areas. Healthy riparian areas also help to maintain healthy fish habitat. Facility construction in riparian areas would reduce the amount of this important habitat available for wildlife use. Many of the proposed projects would actually improve riparian areas, however, by encouraging visitor use of parking, camping, picnicking, and toilet areas away from riparian areas. Riparian areas that are now currently damaged from visitor use would be repaired, thus improving wildlife and fish habitat condition. The addition of flush toilets, showers, and water systems would contribute to water depletion. Please see Table 4 for a breakdown of water use by recreation site.

TABLE 4
WATER CONSUMPTION FOR TAYLOR LOOP RECREATION SITES

TAYLOR CANYON SITES	COMMENTS	# OF SITES	1 PAOT PER SITE	WATER USE PER PAOT (GALS/DAY)	TTL WATER USE (GALS/DAY)
ALMONT C.G.	Existing Water Use (ALT A)	10	4.0	5	200
ALMONT C.G.	Converts to Day Use (ALT B,C,D)	10	4.0	1	40
SPRING CREEK C.G.	Existing Water Use (ALT A,B,C,D)	12	3.5	5	210
GRANITE TENT	No Water (ALT A)	5	3.5	0	0
NORTH BANK C.G.	Existing Water Use (ALT A,B)	17	4.0	5	340
NORTH BANK C.G.	Converts to Day Use (ALT C,D)	17	4.0	1	68
ONE MILE TENT	Existing Use (ALT A)	5	3.5	5	88
ONE MILE TENT	Obliterate (ALT B,C,D)	5	3.5	0	0
ONE MILE SITES	Existing Water Use (ALT A,B,C)	23	3.5	5	402
ONE MILE SITES	Flush Toilets (ALT D)	23	3.5	12	966
ONE MILE HOOKUPS	Existing Water Use (ALT A,B,C,D)	2	3.5	25	175
ROSY LANE C.G.	Existing Water Use (ALT A,B,C)	20	3.5	5	350
ROSY LANE C.G.	Showers, Toilets (ALT D)	20	3.5	25	1750
LODGEPOLE C.G.	Existing Water Use (ALT A,B)	16	3.5	5	280
LODGEPOLE C.G.	Obliterate (ALT C,D)	16	3.5	0	0
COLD SPRINGS C.G.	No Water (ALT A,B,C,D)	6	3.5	0	0
LOTTIS C.G.	Existing Water Use (ALT A,B)	28	3.5	5	490
LOTTIS C.G.	New Sites (ALT C)	20	3.5	5	350
LOTTIS C.G.	Showers, Toilets (ALT D)	48	3.5	25	4200

1= People At One Time

TAYLOR PARK SITES	COMMENTS	# OF SITES	1 PAOT PER SITE	WATER USE PER PAOT (GALS/DAY)	TTL WATER USE (GALS/DAY)
LAKEVIEW C.G.	Existing Water Use (ALT A,B)	46	3.5	5	805
LAKEVIEW C.G.	New Hookups, Showers (ALT C,D)	15	3.5	20	1050
RIVERS END C.G.	Existing Water Use (ALT A,B)	15	4.0	5	300
RIVERS END C.G.	Converts to Day Use (ALT C)	15	4.0	1	60
RIVERS END C.G.	Flush Toilets (ALT D)	15	4.0	12	720
TEXAS CREEK C.G.	New Campground (ALT B)	50	3.5	25	4375
TEXAS CREEK C.G.	New Campground (ALT C,D)	100	3.5	25	8750
REMOTE AREAS					
MIRROR LAKE C.G.	No Water (ALT A)	10	3.5	0	0
MIRROR LAKE C.G.	New Water System (ALT B,C)	10	3.5	5	175
MIRROR LAKE C.G.	New Sites (ALT D)	10	3.5	5	175
DINNER STN C.G.	Current Water Use (ALT A,B,C,D)	22	3.5	5	385
DORCHESTER C.G.	Current Water Use (ALT A,B,C,D)	10	3.5	5	175
MOSCA C.G.	Current Water Use (ALT A)	16	3.5	5	280
MOSCA C.G.	New Picnic Sites (ALT B,C,D)	5	4.0	1	20
GUARD STATION	Current Water Use (ALT A)	1	18	50	900
GUARD STATION	New Hook Ups (ALT B,C,D)	4	3.5	25	350

YEARLY WATER USE

TAYLOR DUMP STN	Current Water Use (ALT A,B,C,D)	53,520 gal/yr
SEWER PONDS	Current Water Use (ALT A,B,C,D)	3,910,210 gal/yr

TOTAL WATER CONSUMPTION

ALTERNATIVE A: 4,609,330 gallons/year = 14.1 acre-feet/year
ALTERNATIVE B: 5,180,530 gal/yr = 15.9 ac-ft/yr
ALTERNATIVE C: 5,778,490 gal/yr = 17.7 ac-ft/yr
ALTERNATIVE D: 6,715,810 gal/yr = 20.6 ac-ft/yr

The increased size of campgrounds and the building of pavilions, amphitheaters, and group camping areas would cause a greater concentration of higher numbers of people at these locations. As previously discussed, many wildlife species (songbirds, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians) are relatively unaffected by visitor use and would continue to use recreation sites. Other species are already avoiding these relatively high use areas (big game, goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, wolverine). Wildlife viewing opportunities are expected to remain similar to current conditions. Fishing pressure near these concentrated use areas may increase as more people are concentrated in localized areas. The Colorado Division of Wildlife may choose to increase fish stocking rates in response to increased fishing pressure. If stocking rates do not increase, angler fishing success may decline with increased fishing pressure. Damage to shorelines and riparian habitat caused by angler use near these concentrated use areas may increase, leading to less healthy fish habitat, caused by sedimentation and loss of fish cover under streambanks.

Closing two campgrounds would allow for revegetation of the sites and the re-establishment of improved wildlife habitat, including important riparian habitat. Visitor use of the sites would also decrease, allowing for increased use of the sites by wildlife. Closure of Lodgepole Campground would mean that current water use (33,600 gals/year) would not be needed. This would reduce the overall water depletion amount in the project area. The conversion of several campgrounds to day use areas may allow for increased wildlife use at night when visitors are not around. However, for most wildlife and fish species, there would not be a noticeable change. Water use would be reduced at sites converted to day use.

New telephone lines to campgrounds would use the existing buried cable system that travels through Taylor Canyon and to the town of Tincup. Additional telephone cable extensions that may be needed would most likely also be an underground system. Electrical service extensions to campgrounds would use nearby existing electrical lines. No additional overhead power lines are expected. As a result, new telephone and electric service to recreation facilities are not expected to affect fish or wildlife.

Many new road sections, parking areas, roadside pull-offs, bridges, trails, and trailheads proposed for construction, reconstruction, and maintenance are located near existing campgrounds. Such improvements in these relatively high visitor use areas are not expected to change current fish and wildlife use. Parking areas, trailheads, and trails constructed in new areas may be avoided by some wildlife species while people are present (big game, waterfowl, goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, wolverine). However, many of the sites proposed for new construction are already being used by people without any managed facilities present. These species are most likely already avoiding these areas, or remaining close by, relatively unbothered by neighboring human activities. Improvements of some parking areas and trails would help to draw people away from riparian areas and allow for repair of currently damaged riparian habitat. Construction of new Taylor Canyon walking trails would allow visitors a greater opportunity to enjoy wildlife viewing and provide better access for fishing. New interpretive signs and brochures would help visitors enjoy wildlife viewing and fishing as well as increasing visitor knowledge about fish and wildlife.

Construction of the raft launching facilities and fishing piers would occur in areas already heavily used by rafters and anglers. A constructed raft launch site would improve riparian resources in the current launch area by the building of facilities to handle the intensive visitor use, and allowing riparian restoration by decreasing the trampling of shoreline vegetation and river banks that is currently occurring. The same is true for fishing pier construction. The facilities themselves are not expected to influence wildlife or change fishing pressure. Improvement of river banks and riparian vegetation would benefit wildlife and fish by improving habitat conditions.

Construction of a boat ramp with related facilities (docks, slips, toilets) is proposed for the existing site of the Taylor Park Boat House. This is currently an area of concentrated use by visitors. Construction of the boat ramp and accompanying facilities is not expected to change current fish or wildlife use of the area.

Improvements to the Taylor Park dump station would occur at the existing dump station site. Changes are not expected to influence fish or wildlife A newly constructed dump station on Wal-Mart property in

Gunnison would hook into the City of Gunnison sewer system. Construction of sewer ponds would not be necessary. This new dump station would not affect wildlife or fish since it is located in an area that currently has little wildlife use.

Improvements to dispersed camping and day use areas would be located in sites that are frequently used now. Wildlife are already used to visitors in these areas now. As previously discussed, some species are avoiding these areas when people are present (big game, waterfowl, goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, wolverine) while other species stay in these areas, bothered little by the presence of people (songbirds, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish). Changes in fishing pressure or wildlife viewing is not expected. Improvements such as defined and/or constructed camping and parking areas, closure and revegetation of unneeded vehicle routes, restoration of resource damage, and installation of toilets would help to minimize resource degradation. Restoration of resource damage would benefit fish and wildlife by improving habitat conditions. The installation of small picnic shelters, overlooks, viewing areas, and information kiosks would not influence wildlife or fish.

Treatment of roads for road dust abatement is not expected to affect wildlife or fish species. Magnesium chloride (MgCl) would be mixed with water and brought up in tanker trucks into the project analysis area. The road to be treated would be bladed, leaving berms of soil along the road shoulders to prevent run-off of the MgCl solution. The MgCl solution would be applied and then the berms of soil would be smoothed over the MgCl layer. This would serve to mix the MgCl in with the road soil and resist run-off from rain. Wildlife and fish are unlikely to come in contact with the MgCl. Dust abatement treatments occur infrequently. If the Best Management Practices (including strict adherence to application rates, use of roadside berms, application during good weather conditions, and avoidance of treatment over stream crossings) are not used and there is an over-application or a mis-application (including spillage into a water source) of MgCl, the MgCl could combine with hydrogen (H) in water to form hydrogen chloride (HCl). HCl would decrease the amount of oxygen in water that is available to fish.

Paving of roads would increase vehicle speeds and perhaps encourage more traffic in areas currently not used as frequently due to rougher access. This may result in more wildlife being hit by vehicles. Mortality from vehicle collisions is not expected to affect the Endangered Species nor most of the Sensitive Species since they are not likely to be crossing roads. Road signs warning motorists of frequent wildlife crossings may be beneficial.

Renovation of the Taylor Park Guard Station and the addition of trailer pads is not expected to affect fish or wildlife. The guard station is an existing site. Most wildlife species remain in the area undisturbed by people. A few other species (big game, goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, wolverine) may avoid the area when people are using the site. The addition of full hookups for new trailer pads would add to the water use in the project analysis area. Four hookups are expected to use 0.1 acre-feet of water a year.

Cumulative Effects

Cumulatively, visitor use is expected to continue to increase over time even if the proposed recreation projects are not implemented. Increased visitor use would mean more people hunt, fish, view wildlife, camp, raft, drive vehicles, hike, and use businesses in the project area. Increased traffic in Taylor Canyon and Lower Spring Creek Canyon would continue to disrupt elk and bighorn sheep migration routes. Please see the previous discussion on the effects of increased visitor use on wildlife, fish, and Endangered and Sensitive Species in Alternative A.

Cumulatively in the Taylor Loop analysis area, water use would increase if the proposed recreation projects are implemented. These increases in water use in the Upper Colorado River Basin would result in water depletion which would negatively affect the four Endangered fish species (Colorado squawfish, razorback sucker, bonytail chub, and humpback chub) in the Lower Colorado River system. Total water use for each of the four project alternatives is as follows.

Alt. A = 14.1 acre-ft/year
Alt. B = 15.9 acre-ft/year
Alt. C = 17.7 acre-ft/year
Alt. D = 20.6 acre-ft/year

For specific project location water use figures, please see Table 4.

The water use quantities for all the project alternatives are considered to be minor water depletion (under 125 acre-feet). The affect of this minor water depletion on the four Endangered fish species of the Colorado River would be mitigated by the Forest Service using the "reasonable and prudent alternatives" issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

There are no irreversible affects from the proposed recreation projects on wildlife, fish, or Endangered and Sensitive Species.

Mitigation Needed for Alternatives B, C, and D.

If a breeding site of a Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or Sensitive Species is located, provide a buffer zone and or a seasonal use restriction around the site to minimize disturbance from recreation sites or activities.

The Forest Service would comply with mitigation measures identified as "reasonable and prudent alternatives" in the Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for these actions for the four Endangered Colorado River fish species.

Use Best Management Practices for application of magnesium chloride for road dust abatement. This includes strict adherence to application rates, application during good weather, use of roadside berms, and avoidance of treatment over stream crossings.

Avoid cutting down snags or trees with dead tops as much as possible. Trees of large diameter (10-20 inches diameter at breast height or greater) and within 500 feet of water are of greatest value to wildlife.

When possible, conduct construction activities (including cutting down trees) outside of the summer wildlife breeding season (approximately mid-May through mid-August) to minimize disturbance.

Avoid construction activities within 100 feet of riparian areas whenever possible.

Use native plant species for revegetation and landscaping whenever possible.

For more detailed information on the Endangered and Sensitive Species in the Taylor Park Loop project analysis area, please see the Biological Assessment and Biological Evaluation for this project.

J. CULTURAL/HERITAGE RESOURCES

ALTERNATIVE A

No change in the status of cultural/heritage resources.

ALTERNATIVE B, C, AND D

There would be minimal impact to the status of cultural/heritage resources, with the exception of two prehistoric sites within the Taylor Park Boat House construction area.

Historic resources would be allowed to deteriorate naturally, with interpretative signs added to significant historic sites.

Prehistoric resource sites would not be identified and would remain protected.

Mitigation

Full mitigation would be required for the two sites (5GN289 and 5GN1399) located within the Taylor Park Boat House construction area. In addition, mitigation of unknown cultural/heritage resources would be required if located during implementation of these projects.

K. LANDS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The lands within the TLRP are a combination of private lands and federal lands. The federal lands are administered by the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Bureau of Reclamation. Much of the land adjacent to Taylor River below Taylor Reservoir is private. Although these areas are attractive to fishermen, the public does not have legal access. Other private lands in the TLRP suffer from unauthorized use by the public occasionally. Some travelways, both trail and road, have private land across them, and most do not have an easement to legally allow the public to cross them. More roads and trails are being closed each year by private land owners.

ALTERNATIVE A, B, C, AND D.

Presently there are some needed right-of-way acquisitions to allow continued or projected future access to National Forest Lands. Acquisitions would be based on funding and district priority.

As the amount of visitor use increases, there would be an increased demand on the lands function of the Forest Service to provide for additional access.

L. TOURISM AND COMMUNITY

EXISTING CONDITION

Tourism is largely affected by the natural qualities of this area. It is enhanced by marketing efforts from private and other public sector agencies. The Gunnison Country Chamber of Commerce documented that over 28% of calls received were inquiries about camping facilities in the project area.

According to the Gunnison Country Chamber of Commerce, tourism is the largest component of the economic base.

Tourism = $35 million
Education = $26 million
Ranching = $ 8 million

The community is currently realizing an increase in tourism-based effects, both in increased number of visitors in recreation settings and in sales and construction of vacation homes and real estate.

ALTERNATIVE A

The trend of increasing tourism, the strong tourism economy, and effects on community would continue.

Forest Plan direction calls for providing economic growth for industries and communities dependent upon Forest outputs, including tourism. Local tourism growth would increase in all alternatives, assuming there are no changes to the larger tourism economy.

ALTERNATIVES B, C, AND D

Alternatives B, C, and D should all improve the degree to which Forest Service recreation facilities and opportunities meet the need of recreation visitors. All three alternatives add developed sites, with Alternatives C and D adding the most. Use, tourism and local economic benefits would increase accordingly.

Alternatives B, C, and D would have an overall positive effect on commercial operations within the project area (Cranor's Store, Taylor Park Boathouse, Harmel's, Three Rivers Resort and others) and in Gunnison. These alternatives show an increase in the number of recreation sites and thus an increase in recreation use.

Community effects of a growing recreation economy would continue with these alternatives. Tourism and economy would be enhanced by all three alternatives. Increasing pressures on real estate would not be affected to any real degree by these alternatives.

Local economy should be enhanced by construction projects in Alternatives B, C, and D. A local business opportunity would be created by allowing the Texas Creek Campground to be designed, built, and operated by the private sector.

M. ECOSYSTEM AND BIO-DIVERSITY

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Due to the large size of the project analysis area, there is a high level of bio-diversity. There is a great variety of wildlife, fish, and plant species and the habitats to support them. Rare and unique species such as Endangered, Proposed (species proposed for listing as Threatened or Endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), and Forest Service Sensitive plants, mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, and reptiles live in the project analysis area. The population numbers of these species are still low, but some species like the Endangered bald eagle and peregrine falcon are greatly increasing nationally. Forested habitats range from very early successional stages to old growth.

Although wildfires are still being suppressed, some wildfires still occur regularly, and prescribed fire is being used in the project analysis area. Recreation use, timber harvesting, livestock grazing, water use, and private land use are other human activities that affect wildlife, plants, their habitat, and other ecosystem components like soil, water, and air.

ALTERNATIVE A

Visitor use is expected to continue to increase over time even if the proposed recreation projects are not implemented. Habitat and resources that are currently degraded due to visitor impacts (vegetation loss, soil compaction, erosion, water quality degradation, etc.) are expected to continue and accelerate in some areas as more people use previously unused or little used areas. Degraded habitat may result in the loss of plants and wildlife in localized areas. Overall in the project analysis area, visitor use is not expected to cause the loss of species, however, because of the large amount of habitat in the project analysis area that is little influenced by visitor use or recreation-caused resource degradation. Soil, water, and air resources are not expected to be influenced by increased recreation use in a substantial manner in the overall project analysis area.

Current management of fire, timber, and livestock grazing would continue. Current private land use would most likely also continue. Water use in the project analysis area is expected to increase with increased visitor use and private land development. Increased water use in the project analysis area would cause increased water depletion in the Lower Colorado River system. Water depletion negatively affects four Endangered Colorado River fish species: Colorado squawfish, razorback sucker, bonytail chub, and humpback chub. The Forest Service is required to ensure that all of its management actions or private operations conducted on National Forest lands comply with the mitigation measures identified

by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as "reasonable and prudent alternatives" to avoid the likelihood of jeopardy to these four Endangered fishes.

ALTERNATIVE B, C, AND D

Visitor use in the Taylor Loop Project area is expected to continue to increase over time whether the proposed recreation projects are implemented or not. The proposed projects are located in areas that currently have relatively high visitor use. There would not be much change from the proposed new facilities on soil, water, air, plants, wildlife, fish, or habitat from the conditions that now exist with the present facilities and visitor use levels. The proposed new Texas Creek Campground would be located at a site that is not currently occupied by a developed recreation site. However, the proposed campground site is of small acreage relative to the large amount of similar habitat (open parkland sagebrush and lodgepole pine forest) that exists nearby. Many of the proposed projects involve designing recreation facilities that locate visitor use away from riparian and damaged resource areas. Resource damage repair would also be done. Improvement of riparian areas and damaged resources would benefit wildlife, fish, plants, and habitat conditions.

Overall in the project analysis area, visitor use is not expected to cause the loss of plant, wildlife, or fish species because of the large amount of habitat in the project analysis area that is little influenced by visitor use or recreation-caused resource degradation. The development of the proposed recreation facilities and operations are not likely to have any overall substantial affects on soil, water, air, wildlife, fish, or plant resources. Water use would increase with the implementation of the proposed recreation projects. Increased water use in the project analysis area contributes to water depletion in the Lower Colorado River system. The four Endangered Colorado River fish species are negatively affected by water depletion. The Forest Service would comply with the mitigation measures identified by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as "reasonable and prudent alternatives" to avoid the likelihood of jeopardy to these four Endangered fish species.

Current management of fire, timber, and livestock grazing is expected to continue as well as current activities on private land.

Implementation of the alternatives in the Taylor Loop area would not affect biodiversity or overall ecosystem health in the project analysis area.

VI. *ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF SITE SPECIFIC OPTIONS*

INTRODUCTION. Chapter VI discusses the environmental effects of site specific options that were considered at individual sites. The discussion of those effects is organized by options considered at each site. This level of analysis provides a basis for decisions regarding the site specific repairs or developments at each site or location discussed.

A. CAMPGROUNDS

1. COMMON EFFECTS OF CAMPGROUND OPTIONS

Options include: I. No Action, II. Remove Campground/Campsites, III. Rehabilitate Campground/ Campsites, IV. Convert Campground to Day Use, and V. New Campground Construction, or Additions to Existing Campgrounds.

Refer to Table 1 for a description of the options considered at each campground.

* NO ACTION

The primitive character of any campground and capacity for camping and picnicking at developed sites is unchanged by choosing the no action option. Occupancy rates at these sites is currently high and is likely to increase only in the more remote campgrounds where occupancy rates are not as high; i.e., Dinner Station, Dorchester, and Mosca Campgrounds.

Conflicts and congestion at or near developed sites may increase as a result of the general trend toward increasing use in the canyon, i.e., ingress/egress problems, noise effects of kayakers and rafters.

Most of the campgrounds are fenced, eliminating any mixing of campers and livestock. Without mixing, there is no livestock/visitor conflict. Effects between livestock and visitors with the unfenced campgrounds would be discussed on an individual campground basis. Existing conflicts between the cattle drive and road uses would continue.

Deficiencies in health, safety, and accessibility would continue and possibly worsen with time.

Budgets for operation and maintenance are likely to decline over time. This would lessen the Forest Service ability to perform operation functions.

Information and interpretation at developed sites remains unchanged with most information delivered through campground hosts.

Currently water quality tests show that Taylor River and its tributaries are of very high quality. With no change, it would be expected to remain very high. At some individual sites, water quality could become of concern. These would be covered under specific sites below.

Existing campground use does not constitute a significant effect to air quality.

Soils within campgrounds vary by the location of the campground. For the most part they are derived from granite or alluvial deposits. In general, very little soil erosion is occurring from any campground. Erosion is occurring from foot traffic within the campground compacting soils and trampling vegetation. These areas then cannot support any vegetation and some erosion does occur. Most of the campgrounds are level enough that this erosion is very limited. However, there are some steep areas within the campgrounds where some active erosion occurs. Under this option

these erosion problems would continue to increase unless periodic maintenance can control the problem.

With no change in the campgrounds, we can expect to continue to see vegetation within the campgrounds impacted by foot traffic. This would lead to soil compaction which results in a decrease in plant vigor. In some cases, vegetation no longer exists on the heavily compacted ground. For those campgrounds adjacent to or including riparian areas, we would see that pioneered trails would continue to displace riparian vegetation.

The effects of No Action with campground options on wildlife, fish, and Endangered and Sensitive Species has been previously discussed in the Effects of Alternative A. Please refer to this discussion.

Cumulatively, the recent decision to start concessions on a trial basis in campgrounds is expected to improve maintenance and up-keep and reduce costs to the government.

* CLOSE AND REMOVE CAMPGROUND, REVEGETATE SITE

This action is considered only at Lodgepole and Cold Springs Campgrounds. These sites would return to a natural setting with only native plants and natural features being present. The appearance at these sites would be more primitive.

Capacity and use at these sites would be non-existent.

Any congestion or user conflicts would be eliminated at these two campground sites.

Removal of the campground facilities and revegetation of the site would disturb soil, in the short term, however, it would be beneficial in the long term. Both campgrounds are outside of riparian areas, and the Taylor Canyon Road is between the campground and the river. By using erosion control methods such as water control structures and mulch where necessary, erosion would be minimal and water quality would be protected. As vegetation grows on the site, the erosion potential would be the same as the naturally vegetated sites within the area. After removal and revegetation, we would expect to see an overall increase in vegetation within these sites.

Noise from activities needed to remove campground facilities may temporarily cause wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) to avoid a localized area. It is expected that wildlife would quickly return after construction activities cease. Wildlife viewing opportunities would temporarily decrease in localized areas during activities. Viewing opportunities would resume soon after activities cease as wildlife return to the area. Closing campgrounds would allow for revegetation of the sites and the re-establishment of improved wildlife habitat. Visitor use of the sites would also decrease, allowing for increased use of the sites by wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species). Closure of campgrounds would mean that current water use would not be needed.

* REHABILITATE/RECONSTRUCT CAMPGROUND

Rehabilitating an existing campground or picnic site may change its character. Re-aligning turning radiuses, lengthening and widening parking spurs, and providing accessible restrooms and paths may change the sites character, even if native materials are used. For most people, these changes would go unnoticed in terms of the primitive character of the site.

Sites with a "Low" amenity level that are considered for rehabilitation and a change to "Medium" amenity level include Spring Creek, Granite Tent, and North Bank Campgrounds. For some people paving the campground road, adding a water system (Granite Tent), or adding an accessible fishing trail would give these sites a less primitive character.

Sites which are rehabilitated from a "Low" or "Medium" amenity to a "High" amenity level may also be considered less primitive by those individuals who are seeking facilities with few amenities, such as, gravel roads, instead of paved campground roads, or no opportunity for showers instead of shower facilities in the campground.

Reconstruction proposals for sites in the canyon include approach signing to developed sites. Deceleration lanes are proposed at Almont Campground. Entrance roads at Lottis Campground are reduced from three to one. The congestion in the canyon should be reduced by these actions.

Rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of the campgrounds would include a perimeter fence that would exclude livestock. This would eliminate conflict between livestock and campers. Existing conflicts with livestock operation on roads would continue.

Rehabilitating developed sites improves health, safety, and accessibility in those sites. Campground roads and parking spurs would be reshaped to meet standards for turning radius and lane width. Steps and walking paths to campsites would be repaired. Restrooms, parking and camping sites would be built to meet Americans With Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines.

Rehabilitating sites costs more than leaving sites as they are and continuing to operate them as is. Once a site is reconstructed, operation and maintenance costs of the sites would decrease as a result of installing low or medium maintenance structures, i.e., using native rock barriers instead of manufactured barriers. Operation and maintenance costs would increase where complex structures are added, i.e., flush toilets or showers.

At the campgrounds that would be rehabilitated soil disturbance would occur during the rehabilitation process. The effects of soils and water quality would be the same as with the option to close and remove campgrounds.

None of the construction would be within wetlands or riparian areas. Best Management Practices during and after construction and reconstruction would be followed to keep soils in place to prevent soil erosion or movement into waterways.

During the reconstruction these campgrounds would have vegetation removed from the site. Following reconstruction work, seeding and vegetation would return. With proper design of the campground through the placement of toilets and other necessities, the amount of pioneered trails should be reduced. People would use either constructed trails or the roads to access the facilities. This should reduce the overall amount of vegetation impacted.

Construction projects in the analysis area would require that some trees be cut down. This would remove some potential trees for wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species). Plenty of trees and forested habitat remains, however, in the specific project locations as well as throughout the project analysis area. (Many trees useful to wildlife, will be retained. This includes trees near water that are dead or have dead tops).

Noise from construction activities may temporarily cause wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) to avoid a localized area. It is expected that wildlife would quickly return after construction activities cease. Wildlife viewing opportunities would temporarily decrease in localized areas during construction activities. Viewing opportunities would resume soon after construction activities cease as wildlife return to the area.

The recreation facilities themselves that would be constructed in existing campgrounds are not expected to affect most fish and wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species). Proposed campsites, toilets, showers, water systems, buildings, play equipment, fences, picnic pavilions,

amphitheaters, etc. would be located in areas of high visitor use. Wildlife species are currently avoiding these high visitor use areas already or are adapted to human recreation activities. An exception to this is when the construction of facilities occurs in riparian areas. Riparian areas are important habitat for wildlife, and wildlife use is concentrated in these areas. Healthy riparian areas also help to maintain healthy fish habitat. Facility construction in riparian areas would reduce the amount of this important habitat available for wildlife use. Many of the proposed projects would actually improve riparian areas, however, by encouraging visitor use of parking, camping, picnicking, and toilet areas away from riparian areas. Riparian areas that are now currently damaged from visitor use would be repaired, thus improving wildlife and fish habitat conditions. The addition of flush toilets, showers, and water systems would contribute to water depletion. Please see Table 4 for a breakdown of water use by recreation site.

The increased size of campgrounds and the building of pavilions, amphitheaters, and group camping areas would cause a greater concentration of high numbers of people at these locations. Many wildlife species (songbirds, small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians) are relatively unaffected by visitor use and would continue to use recreation sites. Other species are already avoiding these relatively high use areas (big game, goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, wolverine). Wildlife viewing opportunities are expected to remain similar to current conditions. Fishing pressure near these concentrated use areas may increase as more people are concentrated in localized areas. The Colorado Division of Wildlife may choose to increase fish stocking rates in response to increased fishing pressure. If stocking rates do not increase, angler fishing success may decline with increased fishing pressure. Damage to shorelines and riparian habitat caused by angler use near these concentrated use areas may increase, leading to less healthy fish habitat caused by sedimentation and loss of fish cover under streambanks.

New telephone lines to campgrounds would use the existing buried cable system that travels through Taylor Canyon and to the town of Tincup. Additional telephone cable extensions that may be needed would most likely also be an underground system. Electrical service extensions to campgrounds would use nearby existing electrical lines. No additional overhead powerlines are expected. As a result, new telephone and electric service to recreation facilities are not expected to affect fish or wildlife (including Endangered or Sensitive Species). Cumulatively in the Taylor Loop analysis area, water use would increase if the proposed recreation projects are implemented.

* CONVERT CAMPGROUND TO DAY USE FACILITY

Converting a campground to a day use facility does not alter the primitive character of the site.

Converting Almont and North Bank Campgrounds to day use sites would either reduce congestion and user conflict or have no effect on them. A reduction could occur as a result of providing opportunities for day use activities to occur where road ingress/egress is adequate, as opposed to the many road access points along the river now with poor site distance. At Almont, conversion to day use would reduce the conflict between picnickers and campers.

Conflicts between cattle operations and visitors should be reduced. Almont is outside of any livestock grazing allotment so there would be no effect. However, North Bank would continue to have potential conflicts. These conflicts would be reduced with redesign of the trail, road and recreation facilities to create separation between uses. A fence would also be used to keep cows out of picnic sites.

Converting to day use would also include rehabilitation and improving health, safety, and accessibility at those sites. Roads and parking spurs would be realigned to improve lane width and turning radius. Trails, picnic table sites and restrooms would be constructed to meet ADAAG standards.

Revenues are lost when converting to day use as fees would not be charged in most cases.

(See "Rehabilitate/Reconstruct Campground" for cost benefit effects of adding amenities to sites.)

The effects to vegetation under this option is very similar to the rehabilitation option. With the conversion of campgrounds to day use, soil disturbance during the construction would be revegetated. The design should help to reduce the cutting of trails between individual sites and the common facilities such as toilets and trash collection.

The conversion of campgrounds to day use areas may allow for increased wildlife use at night when visitors are not around. However, for most wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) and fish species, there would not be much of a noticeable change. Water use would be reduced at sites which are converted to day use. Cumulatively this reduces water depletion.

* NEW CAMPGROUND CONSTRUCTION, OR ADDITIONS TO EXISTING CAMPGROUNDS

Options considered for new campgrounds include new construction at Texas Creek and new loops at Lottis, Lakeview, and Mirror Lake Campgrounds. The character of Lakeview, Lottis, and Mirror Lake sites either would not be effected or would be made slightly less primitive by virtue of adding more capacity and people to those campground areas.

The site for the Texas Creek Campground would become less primitive with the establishment of a campground in that location. Some people may perceive that the larger campground (100 sites) is less primitive than the smaller (50 sites) campground option. The 15 tent sites of the larger campground may be more primitive in character than traditional sites but are still less primitive than no facility at all.

All these campgrounds are within the Roaded Natural and Rural ROS class. Construction of campground facilities is consistent with the character of this ROS class.

Congestion at the Lottis Campground entrance would increase slightly as a result of adding sites and capacity to the campground. The net effect would be a reduction in congestion as a result of reducing entrances to the campground from two to one, and eliminating the entrance to the dispersed area across the highway from the campground.

Any new campgrounds constructed would have a perimeter fence, thus eliminating any possible conflict between the campers and livestock. The campgrounds that might be renovated to would also be fenced, eliminating any livestock/visitor conflicts.

Under this option, one campground would be constructed and several would be enlarged. Best Management Practices during and after construction and reconstruction would be followed to keep soils in place to control soil erosion and sedimentation into waterways.

Constructing new or additional sites would cause a net loss of vegetation. Vegetation would be replaced by roads, parking spurs, table sites, tent pads, trails, and facilities. Effects to riparian areas would be non-existent or minor. Addition of a pathway near Lottis Creek in Lottis Campground may reduce effects of tramping of riparian areas at that site.

Many of the effects of campground construction on wildlife and fish are the same as have been discussed for campground rehabilitation and reconstruction. Some trees would be cut down, noise from construction activities may temporarily cause wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) to avoid a localized area and wildlife viewing opportunities would temporarily decrease. The recreation facilities themselves and additional campground loops that would be constructed in

existing campgrounds and in the new Texas Creek Campground are not expected to affect most fish and wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species). The increased size of campgrounds and the building of pavilions, amphitheatres, group camping areas, telephone lines, and electrical extensions would have the same effects as discussed in the campground rehabilitation and reconstruction section.

Construction of a new campground in a location where there currently are no developed facilities (the proposed Texas Creek Campground) would cause some loss of available habitat for some wildlife. This is a minor loss, however, in the case of the proposed Texas Creek Campground due to the relatively small acreage of the proposed campground and the availability of a large amount of similar habitat nearby that remains (open parkland, sagebrush, and lodgepole pine forest). Construction of the new Texas Creek Campground (with 50-100 campsites) would bring people into a new concentrated use area. This new source of human activity would cause some species (big game for example) to avoid the area. Because most of the visitor use in the campground and surrounding area is during the summer season, wildlife avoidance of the area would be highest during the summer. When visitor use is low during the fall through spring, wildlife avoidance of the area would be lessened. Many other species, however, would not be kept away by the new campground. Some species are not likely to use the site currently (including the Endangered Species, many of the Sensitive Species, and bighorn sheep). Other species are not bothered by human presence and would remain in the area. Such species include songbirds, small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles. The only Sensitive Species likely to avoid the new Texas Creek Campground during high use periods are the goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, and wolverine. However, current use of the Texas Creek Campground site by these four species is considered unlikely. Wildlife viewing in the Texas Creek Campground site and surrounding area is likely to remain high. Fishing pressure in Texas Creek and the other small creeks close to the new campground site may increase with new visitor use. Fish habitat conditions may decline with increased fishing as anglers create trails along streambanks, compacting soil and trampling vegetation.

Cumulatively in the Taylor Loop analysis area, water use would increase if the proposed recreation projects are implemented.

Common to all campground options: investigate the opportunities to place campgrounds into private operation to maintain a high quality facility and operation and investigate the opportunities for the private sector to design, build, and operate the Texas Creek Campground using bid prospectus.

2. ADDITIONAL EFFECTS THAT ARE SPECIFIC TO INDIVIDUAL CAMPGROUNDS

Almont Campground
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Convert to Day Use/Rehabilitate

* *No Action*

Almont Campground currently has several campsites located within the 100 year flood plain. With no action, some campers would be exposed to a risk of flooding. This risk is relatively low in that high water usually occurs during spring snow melt before campers arrive, and the Taylor River is dammed, so flows are controlled.

Almont Campground is also a site where many people launch rafts for floating the Gunnison River. Without proper design, some minor trampling of riparian vegetation and soil compaction which would occur, could lead to a small erosion problem.

* *Convert to Day Use/Rehabilitate*

Elk and bighorn sheep use areas are in close proximity to Almont Campground. Changing sites to day use only during most of the year (except for fall hunting season) would reduce conflict with animals moving through the area at night during these time periods.

Spring Creek Campground
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Rehabilitate (Low); 3. Rehabilitate (Medium)
(No Additional Effects Identified)

Granite Tent
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Rehabilitate (Medium) For Walk-in Tent Sites
(No Additional Effects Identified)

North Bank
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Rehabilitate (Low) For Horse Camping; 3. Convert to Day Use (Medium)

* *No Action*

Conflicts are generated from the mix of trail and trailhead activities within the campground. Horse trailers block campsite entrance roads. Trail use either from cattle or motorcycles disturbs camping activities.

Because the livestock on the Spring Creek Allotment need to use Browns Gulch, there is no way to avoid moving through the campground. In the past the permittee tried to inform the Campground Host and any campers within the campground of when the livestock would be moved so that few people are taken by surprise. The only complaints have been about the dung and smell. Under Option 1, this problem/conflict would continue.

This campground is located in granitic soils, about 15 feet above the river level. Areas leading from the campground to the river's edge are very steep in places. People accessing the river have started trails which, as a consequence, removes vegetation and causes some erosion to exist. This erosion causes this type of soil, which is very coarse and does not have much fine material, to fall to the bottom of the channel. If no action is taken, the campground's soil problems and associated vegetation problems would continue.

* *Rehabilitate and Convert to Horse Campground*

Conflicts, except for those from motorcycle use, should be reduced.

Under this option North Bank would be converted to a "Horse" Campground. The people using this campground would bring their horses. Because of the horse use in this campground, everyone would expect there to be more flies and smell. Because of this expectation, conflict is reduced.

Cattle associated with the Spring Creek Allotment would still move near this campground. Without coordination from the permittees notifying campers that cattle could be coming through, problems could occur. Problems might include horses getting mixed in with the cattle or following the permittee's horses. Another effect could be cattle disturbing camp sites if they are not properly controlled.

* *Convert to Day Use*

Conflicts could be reduced to a greater degree by site redesign to separate uses. Conflict would still exist due to the combination of picnic use, motorcycles, horses and cattle in proximity. It would be reduced by eliminating camping from that mix of uses.

Bighorn sheep migration routes are in close proximity to North Bank Campground. Changing the site to day use only would reduce conflict with animals moving through Taylor Canyon at night.

One Mile
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Minor Rehabilitate (To Move Fee Station) and Add Flush Toilets
(No Additional Effects Identified)

Rosy Lane
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Minor Rehabilitate (Medium); 3. Minor Rehabilitate (High, Add Showers, Flush Toilets)
(No Additional Effects Identified)

Lodgepole
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Rehabilitate; 3. Remove and Revegetate
(No Additional Effects Identified)

Cold Springs
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Rehabilitate as Tent Walk-in; 3. Remove and Revegetate
(No Additional Effects Identified)

Lottis
Options: 1. No Action; 2. New Sites and Days Facilities (Medium); 3. New Sites and Day Facilities (High) Add Flush Toilets and Showers

* *New Sites and Days Facilities (Medium)*

Closing and rehabilitating the camping area on the river side of the road would allow for improvement of riparian habitat.

* *New Sites and Day Facilities (High), Add Flush Toilets and Showers*

Closing and rehabilitating the camping area on the river side of the road would allow for improvement of riparian habitat.

Lakeview
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Make Two (2) Existing Toilets Accessible; 3. Add New Sites and Day Use Facilities (High, Shower Facility and Flush Toilet for New Loop)

* *No Action*

The Lakeview Campground is not fenced out from the lake livestock grazing pasture. This pasture is used about 2-3 years out of four. When cattle use this pasture, some livestock do graze within the campground. This has led to some complaints of people having cows grazing next to their campsite and leaving dung. Under Option 1, these problems would continue.

* *Make Two (2) Existing Toilets Accessible*

This campground would also be fenced and conflicts with cattle would be eliminated.

* *Add New Sites and Day Use Facilities (High, Shower Facility and Flush Toilet for New Loop)*

This campground would also be fenced and conflicts with cattle would be eliminated.

Rivers End
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Rehabilitate (High)
(No Additional Effects Identified)

Mirror Lake
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Rehabilitate (Low); 3. Rehabilitate and Add Ten (10) Sites (Low)
(No Additional Effects Identified)

Dinner Station
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Rehabilitate and Accessibility Trail (Low)
(No Additional Effects Identified)

Dorchester
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Rehabilitate (Low)

* *No Action*

The effects from livestock grazing at this unfenced campground would be the same as Lakeview except grazing takes place only once every three years due to the rest rotation grazing strategy.

* *Rehabilitate (Low)*

Fencing the campground is not proposed in this option. The current level conflict would continue.

Mosca
Options: 1. No Action; 2. Rehabilitate, Add Day Use Sites, Incorporate Group Camping

* *No Action*

This campground is within the Spring Creek Allotment. Cattle graze the area each year. Cattle are within the area of the campground for about 7 days in a row between July and September. Some complaints have been received about livestock in the campground. Under Option 1, we would expect to see these complaints continue.

Mosca Campground is located next to Spring Creek Reservoir. Heavy use down steeper banks and along the shoreline close to the water's edge has had an impact on vegetation. The vegetation would not improve under this alternative.

Damage to the shorelines of Spring Creek Reservoir caused by angler use would continue.

* *Rehabilitate, Add Day Use Sites, Incorporate Group Camping*

The campground would not be fenced and the current level of conflict with livestock would continue.

No changes are expected in the use of Spring Creek Reservoir shoreline for water quality, soil erosion, or wildlife.

Texas Creek (New Construction)
Options: 1. No Action; 2. New Construction 50 Sites (High); 3. New Construction 80 Sites (High), and 15 Sites (Medium) for Tent Walk-in

* *New Construction 50 Sites (High)*

For a discussion of effect on the primitive character of the site, please refer to the discussion under common Effects of Campground Options.

Water use in the new campground would contribute to water depletion in the Lower Colorado River which affects the four Endangered Colorado River fishes. Estimated water use for the Texas Creek Campground is 1.6 acre-feet/year for 50 campsites (Option 2/Alternative B) or 3.2 acre-feet/ year for 100 campsites (Option 3/Alternative C and D). This amount of water use is considered a minor water depletion by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the effects to Endangered fishes can be mitigated by using the "reasonable and prudent alternatives" issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

B. TRAILS

1. EFFECTS OF NEW CONSTRUCTION OPTIONS

Taylor Canyon Walking Trails (Future Project)

Specific trail segments have not been identified for construction and are not a part of the proposed action or alternatives. A separate site specific analysis would be conducted after these specific trail segments are proposed for construction.

Options Include: 1. No Action; and 2. Construction of Future Walking Trails.

* *No Action*

The numbers of people walking on the edge of the canyon road would remain the same. "Local" traffic from campers driving out of campgrounds to a different location to recreate would continue.

Lack of recreation opportunities for campers and picnickers would continue.

People want to get to the water's edge, either for fishing, rafting, or just enjoyment of the river. Most of this access occurs near campgrounds or areas where vehicles can pull off the road and park. The effect to these areas is the some soil and vegetation loss. If no action is taken, conditions would only worsen and improvement would not occur.

* Construction of Future Walking Trails

New walking trails may reduce pedestrian traffic that occurs on the road's edge by providing a more attractive alternative to pedestrians.

"Local" vehicle traffic from campers may be reduced by providing recreation opportunities that can be accessed without the need to drive out of the campground.

Walking trails would better meet the need of current and future visitors for "family" accessible recreation opportunities at developed sites. Visitors would be able to venture from the campground on paths that can be negotiated by all members of the family regardless of ability or disability.

The construction of these trails or access points would affect existing vegetation, in some cases removing vegetation. On the other hand, trail construction would eliminate some of the trampling that is occurring. With properly designed trails, people can be directed to areas that are more stable and to stream banks that are more resistant to cutting. The more fragile sites can be avoided, and people can be encouraged not to use them.

During construction, soil would be disturbed and the potential of sediment into the Taylor River would increase in the short term while the disturbed soils revegetate. By using erosion control practices, soil loss potential can be reduced from the current situation. Final design of these proposals would include a sediment control plan that may include such actions as erosion control blankets, mulching and reseeding with species existing within the site.

With the construction of these access points or trails, some vegetation would be lost. But by directing people down a surface built to withstand traffic, traffic would be removed from the rest of the area. This would allow the vegetation to grow without being trampled.

Trail construction located near existing relatively high visitor use campgrounds is not expected to change current fish and wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) use. Trails constructed in new areas may be avoided by some wildlife species (big game, waterfowl, goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, wolverine) while people are present. However, many of the sites proposed for new construction are already being used by people, without any managed facilities present. These species are most likely already avoiding these areas, or remaining close by, relatively unbothered by neighboring human activities. Improvements of some parking areas and trails would help to direct people away from riparian areas and allow for repair of currently damaged riparian habitat. Construction of new Taylor Canyon walking trails would allow visitors a greater opportunity to enjoy wildlife viewing and provide better access for fishing.

2. EFFECTS OF SUMMER TRAIL OPTIONS

Options included are: I. No Action; and II. Repair Existing Trails to Meet the Standard for Existing Uses.

* No Action

In addition to the existing conditions described in the discussion of effects of alternatives, the following conditions that exist on individual trails would continue with the No Action option. This list does not include all the trails in the project area.

#420 Deadman Gulch
Stream crossing at lower end of trail is eroded and difficult to cross.

#424 Doctor Park
Switchbacks out of North Bank Campground are sloughing. Trail in this location is steep and eroding. Signing is inaccurate.

#413 Matchless
Trail is steep and eroded up to Matchless Mountain.

#411 Star Trail
Steep eroded sections North of American Flag Mountain, wet boggy sections near the forks of Italian Creek. Downfall has caused people to create new trails which are steep and eroding.

#414.1 Timberline
Trail is in good condition from the Garden Basin Mine Road to the Cottonwood Pass Road. The remaining trail has excess rock and boulders in the tread, and clearing problems in some areas. The access point form the Pieplant Road is steep and eroding.

#415 Bear Creek
Bridges are unsafe causing people to ride through the stream and erode the stream banks at the head of Bear Creek. Meadow sections are deeply rutted.

#428 South Lottis
The trail is eroded, and has heavy downfall. Wet boggy sections exist in meadows.

#429 Henry Lake
Switchbacks to Henry Lake have been short cut and need repair.

#561 Eyre Basin
Sections through the timber are steep and eroded.

Due to lack of maintenance in the past, parts of many trails have problems. These problems vary from spot to spot but fall into several categories.

One of the main problems is that water runs down trails, causing erosion problems and possibly changing the natural hydrology of the area below the trails, as well as placing eroded materials into waterways. Under the no action option, trail maintenance budgets would be inadequate to do all the maintenance or reconstruction necessary. Erosion would continue to increase and would become more difficult to control in the future.

With inadequate tread maintenance, the trail can become uninviting, causing people and animals to walk next to the existing trail. This then widens the area of impact, displacing vegetation and soils and leading to an increase in erosion. In some places these trails may now be 10 or more feet wide. Under this option, treatment of these problems would be limited.

Problems occur when people are unable to use existing water crossings and thus make a new one. Incorrect placement of these crossing can lead to bank destabilization or water changing course into the trail and causing erosion.

Where soil disturbance affects water quality, there is an effect to riparian or wetlands. Under this option, trail maintenance would be done based upon the district operating budget for trails. Work to correct trail problems would be done over many years. This extra time would allow problem areas of trail to further degrade; where these occur near or in wetlands we would see a degradation of those resources to continue. The cost of repairing them may increase the longer the problems are not treated.

Effects to TEP&S plant species is difficult to address. Without a complete inventory of the entire project area, we can only look at the probability of occurrence. Existing trails that have been in existence for long periods of time could have directly affected some of these species. With lack of maintenance and people creating their own trails around deadfalls, rocks, or rutted sections, the likelihood of affecting other possible plant sites is increased.

Where trails are improperly built, we may be gathering water and affecting the natural hydrology. Some species depend on water flowing off hill sides to survive. As these problems are left unrepaired, the possibility of effect exists.

Current visitor use levels of trails would continue. Trails in poor condition would continue to contribute to resource damage such as vegetation loss from the creation of new parallel trails, erosion, and riparian area damage. No change in wildlife use, wildlife viewing opportunities, fishing pressure, or visitor disturbance is expected from current conditions.

* Repair Existing Trails to Meet the Standard for Existing Uses

Safety problems, erosion, water quality, and degredations to the recreation opportunity are reduced and in some cases eliminated by choosing the option to repair trail problems.

Under this alternative, reconstruction of approximately 72 miles of existing trails would be completed. Typical work would be outsloping of trail treads where practical to cause water to leave the trail immediately. This would prevent water running down the trails from picking up energy and starting erosion. Effects to the natural hydrology below the trail would be minimized by this action.

Placement of drainage structures to remove water from the trail tread where outsloping cannot occur would have the same effects as the outsloping of trails.

Trails that cross wet areas, bogs, seeps and other problem areas can be relocated to protect water quality. Bridges and or turnpikes will be used in these areas in the trails cannot be relocated. This would reduce effects to soils and water quality.

Stream crossings that have problems can be reconstructed or moved to sites that would not destabilize stream banks or allow water to divert down the trail. This action would lead to improvements of water quality and reduce bank erosion.

Reopening of original trail locations and closing of pioneered trails would have the same benefits as the other actions discussed above.

Reconstruction involves improving the tread surface, out sloping of the tread surface, and water diversion structures to kick water off the trail where it cannot be outsloped. Wet areas can be avoided, bridged, or designed to not obstruct ground flow. All of these can lead to less impact to wetlands, riparian areas and TEP&S plant species. Before any work is done to trails, reconstruction sites would be surveyed to ensure that plant species of concern do not exist. If they do, specific parts of the project would be designed to avoid any direct or indirect impact.

Improvements of some trails would help to draw people away from riparian areas and allow for repair of currently damaged riparian habitat and increased wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) and fish use of these important habitat areas. With improved trail conditions, visitor use of trails may increase. Most wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) such as songbirds, small mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish would not be bothered by the increased visitor use. Other species such as big game, goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, and wolverine may avoid trails when people are present. Wildlife viewing opportunities would remain high.

3. EFFECTS OF EXISTING WINTER TRAILS OPTIONS

Options include: I. No Action; II. Trail Marking, Signing, and Brochure for Existing Nordic and Snowmobile Trails.

* No Action

Current visitor use of winter trails would continue. Summer maintenance and clearing work is minimal.

* Trail Marking, Signing, and Brochure for Existing Nordic and Snowmobile Trails

Better trail marking would encourage visitors to follow established routes. Some wildlife species (including Endangered and Sensitive) may avoid these routes while people are present. Habitat outside of the travel routes, however, may be less used by visitors, decreasing disturbance to wildlife in these areas.

4. EFFECTS OF TRAILHEAD OPTIONS

Options include: I. No Action; II. Construct and Reconstruct Trailheads.

* No Action

Most of these trailheads are not specifically constructed, and control of where vehicles actually park is nonexistent. This allows people to park wherever they want, in some places that is under trees to take advantage of shade, little further down the trail, expanding the impact. Exposed soil translates into erosion and sediment. When the sediment reaches live water, a water quality problem occurs.

There would be no change in wildlife use, wildlife viewing, fishing pressure, or visitor impacts to wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) from current conditions.

* Construct and Reconstruct Trailheads

Soil and vegetation loss should be reduced by confining impacts to a smaller area.

Resource damage including damage in riparain areas would be discontinued and repaired. Moving trailhead parking and visitor use areas away from riparian areas would allow for repair of damaged areas and increased fish and wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) use of these important habitat areas. Wildlife viewing opportunities would increase with improved riparian habitat conditions.

5. ADDITIONAL EFFECTS THAT ARE SPECIFIC TO INDIVIDUAL TRAILHEADS
(No Additional Effects Identified)

C. RECREATION FACILITIES OUTSIDE OF CAMPGROUNDS

1. EFFECTS OF CAR CAMPING AREA (DISPERSED CAMPING) OPTIONS

Options include: I. No Action; II. Repair Resource Damage, Problem Campsites and Vehicle Routes, Public Information Kiosks and Brochures.

* No Action

Campsites are established in remote areas by individuals seeking an out-of-the-way camping spot. Often new vehicle routes and campsites are established as people attempt to get a little further away. Campsites and vehicle routes pioneered this way are often located close to streams in riparian areas. Vehicle routes can be too steep and become eroded or be poorly drained and create boggy

spots. Individuals then drive around those problem spots, enlarging them and increasing impacts to soil and water.

Campsites are heavily impacted, with lower branches stripped from trees, large areas of bare ground, exposed tree roots, and multiple fire rings. Human waste and toilet paper is commonly found on the surface of the ground in the area surrounding many dispersed campsites.

Resource damage such as loss of vegetation, soil compaction, erosion, stream sedimentation, and water quality degradation occurring in dispersed camping areas that are used frequently would continue. There would be no change in wildlife use, wildlife viewing opportunities, fishing pressure, or visitor impacts to wildlife from current conditions.

* Repair Resource Damage, Problem Campsites and Vehicle Routes, Public Information Kiosks and Brochures

This action would repair many existing resource problems. Public information and education, would change the visitor behavior that causes resource problems.

Information bulletin boards established at entrances to dispersed areas and an information and ethics brochure to be dispensed would cause more people to minimize their impacts. Individuals would be encouraged to use existing sites and roads rather than pioneering new ones. Techniques for minimizing impacts to campsites would be explained and implemented.

Vehicle routes that are too steep or have resource problems that can't be repaired would be closed. In areas where more than one route exists to access a campsite, secondary routes would be closed. Native materials such as boulders and decomposed granite would be used to define the limits of vehicle use at primitive campsites. This would reduce soil compaction and vegetation loss at campsites.

These efforts should improve the durability of primitive campsites and reduce the need for individuals to establish new sites.

If this option is carried out, problems with water quality and soils can be improved. Using native rock as subtle barriers would deter enlarging of areas used for parking. This in turn would reduce the amount of vegetation loss and erosion helping to protect water quality.

Improvements to dispersed camping areas would be located in sites that are frequently used now. Wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) are already accustomed to visitors in these areas. Some species are avoiding these areas when people are present (big game, waterfowl, goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, wolverine) while others stay in these areas, bothered little by the presence of people (songbirds, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish). Changes in fishing pressure or wildlife viewing is not expected. Restoration of resource damage would benefit fish and wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) by improving habitat conditions.

2. EFFECTS OF DAY USE SITE OPTIONS

Options include: I. No Action; II. Rehabilitate Existing Facilities.

* No Action

Resource damage such as loss of vegetation, soil compaction, erosion, stream sedimentation, and water quality degradation occurring in dispersed day use areas that are used frequently would

continue. There would be no change in wildlife use, wildlife viewing opportunities, fishing pressure, or visitor impacts to wildlife from current conditions.

* Rehabilitate Existing Facilities

Problems with water quality and soils would be improved under this option with the control of vehicles. Providing a gravel surface can control water run-off and prevent enlarging of the parking areas. This in turn would reduce the amount of erosion, helping to protect water quality.

The construction of parking areas themselves would remove any existing vegetation but would allow the recovery of vegetation that could be affected by the vehicles parking outside of the already impacted areas.

Improvements to day use sites would be located in areas that are frequently used now. Wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) are already accustomed to visitors in these areas now. Some species are avoiding these areas when people are present (big game, waterfowl, goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, wolverine) while others stay in these areas, bothered little by the presence of people (songbirds, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish). Changes in fishing pressure or wildlife viewing is not expected. Improvements such as defined and/or constructed parking areas, closure and revegetation of unneeded vehicle routes, restoration of resource damage, and installation of toilets would help to minimize resource degradation. Restoration of resource damage would benefit fish and wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) by improving habitat conditions. The installation of small picnic shelters, accessible fishing piers and access points, overlooks, viewing areas, and information kiosks would not influence wildlife or fish.

3. ADDITIONAL EFFECTS THAT ARE SPECIFIC TO INDIVIDUAL DAY USE SITES

Options include: I. No Action; and II. Rehabilitate Site.

Rock Climbing Area in Taylor Canyon

* *No Action*

Soil erosion and vegetation loss from vehicles expanding the impacted site would continue.

* *Rehabilitate Site*

Vehicles would be able to park further from the main roadway, reducing safety and congestion problems.

Defining edges to parking areas would prevent the expansion of parking and additional erosion. Landscaping would define paths to the rock climbing and reduce erosion and vegetation loss.

Pothole Reservoirs #1 and #2

* *No Action*

Primitive character would decline over time with continued damage around lake shores and increasing human waste problems.

Soil and vegetation loss would continue and water quality may be affected.

This area is a very popular day use area for fishing. Without traffic control people try to drive to the spot where they would fish. Because people spend several hours at this site and there are no toilet facilities, human waste is a problem. This can directly effect the water quality here as rainstorms wash the waste into the Potholes. With no action, the problems would continue.

Vehicles are not restricted from traveling to the water's edge and around the edges of the Potholes. This has resulted in vegetation being affected directly from the vehicles driving over the vegetation and compaction of the soil where vehicles are making new routes.

* *Rehabilitate Site*

The primitive character would be reduced by adding a toilet structure to an area where similar structures are generally absent. The primitive character is improved by reducing human waste problems and multiple vehicle routes and access points.

Resource and sanitation problems are reduced. Vehicle use is confined, and vegetation will have the chance to recover.

Bull Point

* *No Action*

Character of the area remains static or declines due to increased use.

Sanitation problems around the edge of the reservoir continue.

* *Rehabilitate Site*

Sanitation problems would be reduced. The character of the specific site for the toilet and picnic facility would be less primitive as a result of adding the structure to a site that does not currently contain structures.

* *Management Recommendation*: Use local features and facility design to minimize the visual effect of these facilities at the end of Bull Point and at the Pothole Reservoirs.

Taylor Canyon Gold Medal Fishing Water

* *No Action*

This location would continue to receive a high level of use. The character of the area would continue to be dominated by the Taylor River, the highway and bridge, steep canyon walls, and people fishing.

Roadside parking and pedestrians would continue to add congestion at this location.

There would continue to be little opportunity for individuals with disabilities to access this area. No information or interpretation would exist at this site. The current potential for injury by avalanche would continue to exist.

* *Rehabilitate Site*

Levels of use may increase as people seeking accessible fishing opportunities come to the area. The character of the site may be less primitive with the addition of defined parking and a trail.

Congestion would be increased if additional visitors come to this site. Road side congestion would be reduced overall with improved parking off the edge of the highway.

Accessibility at this site would be improved. Interpretation of the unique fish resource would occur. With developed parking areas away from the avalanche zone, visitor safety would be improved.

Timberline Overlook

* *No Action*

Existing facilities would continue with inaccessible restroom and picnic sites. Interpretation and information would continue to be absent from this site.

* *Rehabilitate Site*

Restroom, parking and picnic site would be accessible. Interpretive facilities would be added.

Taylor Canyon Roadside Pull-offs

* *No Action*

Congestion and safety problems would continue from vehicles using road side pull-offs that encroach on the highway, and from use of parking areas with inadequate entrances for safe ingress and egress.

Parking areas for fishing would continue to limit access to the river for those with disabilities.

* *Rehabilitate Sites*

Taylor Canyon congestion and safety problems would be reduced. Some unsafe pull-offs would be closed and revegetated. Others would have entrance roads improved to a gentler grade and site distance improved. Slower moving vehicles can more easily get out of the lane of traffic.

Some parking areas for fishing would provide access to the river for those with disabilities.

D. BOAT ACCESS

EFFECTS OF TAYLOR RESERVOIR BOAT ACCESS OPTIONS

Options include: I. No Action; and II. Construct Ramp and Day Use Facilities at Existing Taylor Park Boat House.

* NO ACTION

Character and capacity of the Boat House area is unchanged by taking no action. Boaters would not be able to access the Reservoir after Boat House hours at this site.

Existing pit toilets would continue to leak into the ground. Facilities at this site continue to have accessibility deficiencies.

Current use at the Taylor Park Boat House would continue.

* CONSTRUCT RAMP AND DAY USE FACILITIES AT EXISTING TAYLOR PARK BOAT HOUSE

Adding facilities to the boat house that are similar to those that exist there now would not change the character of the site. Use may increase at this site with improved facilities.

The boat ramp, parking, restroom and day use facilities would improve accessibility for those with disabilities. Boat ramp access to the reservoir would not be limited to the operating hours of the Boat House.

Construction of a boat ramp with related facilities (docks, slips, toilets) is not expected to change current fish or wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) use of the area, since this is currently an area of concentrated use by visitors.

E. DUMP STATIONS

EFFECTS OF DUMP STATION OPTIONS

Options include: I. No Action; II. Rehabilitate Existing Taylor Park Sewage Lagoon Site; III. Construct New Dump Station at Wal-Mart or Adjacent to City of Gunnison Site.

* NO ACTION

The primitive character of remote areas would continue to be negatively affected by individuals dumping holding tanks on the ground. Levels of use are unaffected by the no action alternative.

Sanitation problems from individuals dumping their holding tanks in remote ares would continue.

Current use of the Taylor Park dump station would continue. There would be no changes in effects to wildlife.

* REHABILITATE EXISTING TAYLOR PARK SEWAGE LAGOON SITE

Character of the Lagoon site would be unchanged by the addition of a restroom. Character in remote areas would be improved by fewer people dumping holding tanks on the ground. Use at the Lagoon site, and on the road to this site would increase.

Changes are not expected to influence fish or wildlife (including Endangered or Sensitive Species).

* CONSTRUCT NEW DUMP STATION AT WAL-MART OR ADJACENT TO CITY OF GUNNISON SITE

This is not likely to affect Taylor Canyon. Establishing this dump station is not likely to draw more people through the canyon to use this site.

This option is cost effective due to the potential of a participating partner and the opportunity to tie into the city sewer system.

This would improve sanitation problems in the park, but to a lesser degree than improvements or construction of dump facilities closer to the park.

F. INTERPRETATION

EFFECTS OF PUBLIC INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION OPTIONS

Options include: I. No Action; and II. Develop Public Information and Interpretation Signs, Brochures, and Trails, at Existing Developed Recreation Sites as Proposed in the Interpretive Plan.

* NO ACTION

Lack of adequate public information and interpretation would continue.

* DEVELOP PUBLIC INFORMATION AND INTERPRETATION SIGNS, BROCHURES, AND TRAILS, AT EXISTING DEVELOPED RECREATION SITES AS PROPOSED IN THE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

Implementing the interpretive plan would increase public understanding, appreciation of natural and cultural resources, and management activities.

Installation of local radio messages to be transmitted from Almont Day Use site and Taylor Park Ranger Station would redirect traffic out of the canyon and park when sites are full in those areas. Congestion should be reduced by this feature.

New interpretive signs and brochures would help visitors enjoy wildlife viewing and fishing as well as increase visitor knowledge about fish and wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species).

G. ROADS

1. EFFECTS OF ROAD OPTIONS

Options include: I. No Action; II. Reconstruction of Road and Bridges; III. Dust Abatement; and IV. Paving.

* No Action

No action does not affect the primitive character of the area. Current road sections that are wash boarded and dusty discourage use in those areas, although the general trend is still toward increasing use. Poor road conditions would continue to deteriorate in some areas.

Low frequency of maintenance of gravel beyond the pavement on the Taylor Park road and on the Spring Creek Road would continue to allow wash boarding to be present a majority of the time.

The main gravel surfaced roads (Spring Creek, Upper Taylor and Tincup Roads) receive a fair amount of traffic and produce a large amount of dust. Larger vehicles such as commercial trucks and larger motorhomes and trailers even produce more dust per vehicle than cars or pickups. The amount of dust that is generated is insignificant to the air quality of the basin; it does affect the air quality within several hundred feet of the roads. Under this alternative the dust problem would continue to affect other vehicles and anybody else that might be near the road fishing or hiking. There are times on calm evenings that the dust from each vehicle would hang in the air and be visible for many minutes. This can be an irritant to people and cause visibility problems for drivers.

Dust from these road does fall into the water and covers vegetation next to the streams. During rainstorms this can be washed off and run into the stream. This is not likely to be a significant problem.

No changes to fish, wildlife, Endangered or Sensitive Species is expected.

* Reconstruction of Road and Bridges

Improvements to roads and bridges may be viewed by some people as making the sites of those improvements less primitive. Increasing use trends may be accelerated by making the area easier to access by vehicles.

Road safety would improve with reconstruction.

Sanitation and resource problems may increase somewhat as improved access causes more people to choose to visit remote areas.

It can be assumed that with the road very close to Spring Creek there would be periodic increases of sedimentation into Spring Creek affecting water quality. Newly exposed soil would add to this problem. Because the road fill touches the stream in some places, some soil movement into the stream would occur. This effect would be short term during the reconstruction work.

The two bridges on the Tincup Road would be replaced with wider bridges and the approaches would be changed to improve safety. With construction within the riparian areas and in or near the stream there would be short periods of time when water quality would be affected. The effects should clear up quickly, and with minimizing the amount of sediment within the stream, the effects should only be short term.

No effects to any TEP&S plant species is foreseen. The replacement of two bridges would have the largest impact on vegetation. With the placement of wider bridges, it can be expected that an additional 20-30 feet of riparian vegetation per bridge would be lost. Some of that would grow back following construction.

The proposed projects for reconstruction of existing roads and bridges would have no major changes on fish, wildlife, or Endangered and Sensitive Species, with the exception of impacts to riparian habitat. With the construction of new wider bridges, some riparian habitat would be lost or damaged temporarily. This would reduce the amount and quality of this important habitat for wildlife and fish.

* Dust Abatement

Adding dust abatement to roads may draw additional use through the Taylor Canyon to visit remote areas where access is improved. Use in the Taylor Canyon may decrease if the Spring Creek/Rocky Brook alternative becomes easier to drive and is used by more people as an alternative to the Taylor Canyon Road.

Sanitation and resource problems may increase somewhat as improved access causes more people to choose to visit dispersed areas.

Under this option the Spring Creek Road and Tincup Road would receive dust abatement. These actions would reduce the site specific problems with dust. Dust into the streams would also be reduced.

No effects would occur to vegetation or by applying non-toxic dust abatement to road surfaces.

Treatment of roads for dust abatement is not expected to affect wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species) or fish species. Magnesium chloride (MgCl) would be mixed with water and brought up in tanker trucks into the project analysis area. The road to be treated would be bladed, leaving berms of soil along the road shoulders to prevent run-off of the MgCl solution. The MgCl solution would be applied and then the berms of soil would be smoothed over the MgCl layer. This would serve to mix the MgCl in with the road soil and resist run-off from rain. Wildlife and fish are unlikely to come in contact with the MgCl. Dust abatement treatments need to be reapplied on an annual basis at one half the quantity of the initial applicaton. If the Best Management Practices (including strict adherence to application rates, use of roadside berms, application during good weather conditions, and avoidance of treatment over stream crossings) are not used and there is an over-application or a misapplication (including spillage into a water source) of MgCl, the MgCl would combine with hydrogen (H) in water to form hydrogen chloride (HCl). HCl would decrease the amount of oxygen in water that is available to fish. No cumulative, irreversible, or irretrievable effects are expected.

* Paving

Paving road sections in areas where paving does not now exist would be perceived as making those roads or areas less primitive in character. Paving the Spring Creek/Rocky Brook loop would make the character of that road less primitive.

Increasing use trends may be accelerated by making the area easier to access by vehicle.

Adding paving to some roads may draw additional use through the canyon to remote areas where access is improved. There may be a net decrease in canyon use if the Spring Creek/Rocky Brook alternative becomes easier to drive and is used by more people as an alternative to the Taylor Canyon Road.

When traffic volumes are greater than 200 vehicles per day, over a 20 year period an asphalt surface is the least cost surface. This is because of the higher maintenance costs that occur with a gravel road with increased volume of traffic. This also assumes funds would be available to adequately maintain the gravel road.

Traffic volumes during the summer season are greater than 200 vehicles per day on the Tincup, Upper Taylor, and Spring Creek roads. Data is unavailable for the Rocky Brook Road, but it's estimated to be less than 200 vehicles per day.

Sanitation and resource problems may increase somewhat as improved access causes more people to choose to visit dispersed areas.

The placement of pavement would have no effect on any vegetation or plant species.

Paving of roads would increase vehicle speeds and perhaps encourage more traffic in areas currently not used as frequently due to rougher access. This may result in more wildlife being hit by vehicles. Mortality from vehicle collisions is not expected to affect the Endangered Species or most of the Sensitive Species since they are not likely to be crossing roads.

2. ADDITIONAL EFFECTS THAT ARE SPECIFIC TO INDIVIDUAL ROAD SEGMENTS

Tincup Road #765

Options: 1. No Action; 2. Pave to Sewage Lagoon/Reconstruct Two Bridges
(No Additional Effects Identified)

Spring Creek Road #744

Options: 1. No Action; 2. Pave 1/10 Mile Past Campground and Pave 1/2 Mile of Steep Section at Little Falls Bridge, Dust Abate Entire Length to Mosca Campground; 3. Pave to Mosca Campground.

* No Action

There will be a continued safety problem due to dust, steepness of the road at Little Falls, washboarding and mixing of heavy vehicle and tourist traffic.

* Pave 1/10 Mile Past Campground and Pave 1/2 Mile of Steep Section at Little Falls Bridge, Dust Abate Entire Length to Mosca Campground

Safety would be improved with paving and dust retardant. Sight distance would be improved and washboarding of the road would be reduced.

* Pave to Mosca Campground

Safety would be improved over Options 1 and 2.

Taylor Park Road from End of Pavement to Rocky Brook Road, #748, and on to Mosca Campground

Options: 1. No Action; 2. No Paving, Dust Abatement to Junction with Rocky Brook Road; 3. Pave Entire Length to Mosca Campground.
(No Additional Effects Identified)

H. HOUSING

EFFECTS OF EMPLOYEE HOUSING OPTIONS

Options include: I. No Action; II. Rehabilitate Taylor Park Guard Station.

* NO ACTION

No action would not affect the character or use of the site. There is no effect on canyon congestion, or visitor conflicts.

No changes to wildlife, fish, Endangered and Sensitive Species are expected.

* REHABILITATE TAYLOR PARK GUARD STATION

Cost effectiveness for all maintenance is improved by providing additional space to house volunteers, and seasonals, and by housing them closer to the work.

Renovation of the Taylor Park Guard Station and the addition of trailer pads is not expected to affect fish or wildlife (including Endangered and Sensitive Species). The guard station is an existing site.

Most wildlife species remain in the area undisturbed by people. A few other species (big game, goshawk, ferruginous hawk, lynx, wolverine) may avoid the area when people are using the site. The addition of full hookups for new trailer pads would add to the water use in the project analysis area. Four hookups are expected to use 0.1 acre-feet of water per year.

APPENDIX A

MITIGATION MEASURES AND MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

MITIGATIONS MEASURES

The Forest Service will comply with mitigation measures identified as "reasonable and prudent alternatives" in the Biological Opinion issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for this action for the four Endangered Colorado River fish species.

In respect to Alternative A, B, C, and D, if a breeding site of a Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, or Sensitive Species is located, provide a buffer zone and/or a seasonal use restriction around the site to minimize disturbance from recreation sites or activities.

Full mitigation will be required for the two sites (5GN289 and 5GN1399) located within the Taylor Park Boat House construction area. In addition, mitigation of unknown cultural/heritage resources will be required if located during implementation of these projects.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

If the timing of project funding allows, implement additions to developed site capacity in the project area after repairs to the Taylor Canyon Road have been made.

Investigate the opportunities to place campgrounds into private operation and maintain a high quality facility and operation.

Investigate opportunity to make the design, construction and operation of the Texas Creek Campground available to the private sector.

Explore opportunities to create wetlands in the design and construction of Texas Creek Campground.

Investigate the opportunities to expand the use of volunteer program in dispersed areas for removal of trash, and dispensing camping ethics information.

Use local features and facility design to minimize the visual effect of these facilities.

Use Best Management Practices for application of magnesium chloride for road dust abatement. This includes strict adherence to application rates, application during good weather, use of roadside berms, and avoidance of treatment over stream crossings.

Avoid cutting down snags or trees with dead tops as much as possible. Trees of large diameter (10-20 inches diameter at breast height or greater) and within 500 feet of water are of greatest value to wildlife.

When possible, conduct construction activities (including cutting down trees) outside of the summer wildlife breeding season (approximately mid-May through mid-August) to minimize disturbance.

Avoid construction activities within 100 feet of riparian areas whenever possible.

Use native plant species for revegetation and landscaping whenever possible.

Post wildlife crossings on roads.

Use temporary erosion control measures (as needed) to minimize sediment.

-Sediment fabric, filter cloth, straw bales, check dams, and sand bags are placed to catch sediment prior to entering streams.

Protect existing vegetation during design and construction. Save vegetation where possible prior to disturbance of construction.

Save top soil during construction work and respread as part of final revegetation work.

-Prepare a proper seedbed by scarifying the top 4 to 6" of soil before seeding.

-Use mulch after seeding.

When revegetating, site preparation, mulching needs, application methods and rates, timing and species selection will be made based upon a site assessment. This should be included in the final design plans for removal of any campgrounds, or restoration of other sites.

APPENDIX B
USDA FOREST SERVICE SENSITIVE SPECIES
THAT MAY OCCUR IN THE TAYLOR PARK LOOP PROJECT ANALYSIS AREA

MAMMALS

Pine marten, *Martes americana*

Found in dense spruce, fir, and lodgepole pine above 9000 feet. According to local CDOW, marten are common in the Gunnison Basin. Currently harvested. Will use openings in the summer such as rock scree but probably will not use open areas that do not have escape cover.

Ringtail, *Bassariscus astutus*

Uses steep, rocky, broken terrain between 6,000 and 9,500 feet. Specimens found at Taylor Dam and above Gothic.

North American lynx, *Felis lynx canadensis*

Habitat is found from 9500 feet to timberline in all but aspen. Diet is heavily dependent on snowshoe hare. Prefers dark, thick timber going towards steep, rocky, north to east slopes for denning. Travels along timbered ridges. May not use meadows larger than 4 acres.

North American wolverine, *Gulo gulo luscus*

Needs large areas with little human activity. Den sites are in rocky areas, caves, logs, or snags. Prefers high elevations, (including tundra) in summer and may follow big game populations in winter. Territory may be as big as 80 square miles. A skull was found near Cimarron Creek, indicating the animal had lived within the last 15 years. Unconfirmed sightings occur yearly in the basin.

Dwarf shrew, *Sorex nanus*

Found mainly in alpine and subalpine rock slides. Tolerant to grazing and logging.

Pygmy shrew, *Microsorex hoyi montanus*

Found in the deep woods of the boreal forest, fields, sphagnum bogs, and other wet areas. Live beneath logs, roots of trees stumps, and vole runways. Known only from the mountains of Larimer and Grand counties.

Townsend's big-eared bat, *Plecotus townsendii*

Uses a variety of scrub and forested habitats. Cool places such as caves, rock crevices, mines, and buildings are used for roosting and hibernation. Vulnerable to human disturbance due to their tendency to gather in maternity and hibernation colonies. A specimen was found near Gothic.

BIRDS

Merlin, *Falco columbarius*

A rare to uncommon spring and fall migrant and winter resident. Found in riparian forest, open grasslands, pastures, and urban areas.

Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*

A probable migrant in the Gunnison Basin, but there may be some nesting. Prefers habitats along lakes and rivers. Nests near or over water. There was a confirmed sighting along the Gunnison River, west of Gunnison in 1992.

Northern goshawk, *Accipiter gentilis*

Found in mature stands of aspen, ponderosa & lodgepole pine, and spruce forests. Forages low in the woodland, taking slightly more birds than mammals. Probably will not use openings larger than 300 feet wide. Foraging areas can be up to 6000 acres.

Boreal owl, *Aegolius funereus*

Habitat consists of mature spruce/fir or spruce/fir/lodgepole pine interspersed with meadows. Mostly high elevation (9000 feet and above). Known to occur in the Gunnison Basin.

Flammulated owl, *Otis flammeolus*

Found in the foothills and lower mountains in old growth ponderosa pine and ponderosa/Douglas fir. May also be found in mixed aspen. Found at elevations up to 10,000 feet.

Greater sandhill crane, *Grus canadensis*

A migrant in the Gunnison Basin. Likes large open expanses of grasslands, moist meadows, and reservoir mudflats.

Three-toed woodpecker, *Picoides tridactylus*

A year-round resident in the high mountains. Most common in areas where trees have numerous insects due to disease or fire. Found primarily in spruce/fir but may use any coniferous forest when insects are present in high numbers.

Golden-crowned kinglet, *Regulus satrapa*

Breeds primarily in mature, dense, spruce-fir forests. In winter, occurs in coniferous forests, especially Douglas fir and ponderosa pine.

Purple martin, *Progne subis*

A common summer resident in NW Gunnison County and rare spring and fall migrant in western valleys. Needs snags near water for breeding. Occurs in old growth aspen and mixed aspen/ ponderosa pine or aspen/Douglas fir near parks, under 10,000 feet elevation. Found in riparian areas, reservoirs, and open pastures during migration.

Pygmy nuthatch, *Sitta pygmaea*

Primarily found in ponderosa pine and aspen, but has also been found in lodgepole pine. Rare in Douglas fir, spruce/fir, pinyon/juniper and lowland riparian forests. Population varies with cone crops. This bird is a cavity nester. Found at 5500 - 10,000 feet elevation.

Loggerhead shrike, *Lanius ludovicianus*

Fairly common spring and fall migrant and summer resident, rare winter resident in western valleys. Rare to uncommon in mountain parks, rare in mountains (no breeding records). Habitat consists of open riparian areas, grasslands, shrublands, pastures, and especially semi-desert shrublands. Sometimes found in open pinyon-juniper. Found below 9,000 feet.

Olive-sided flycatcher, *Contopus borealis*

Summer resident in higher mountains, rare to uncommon in lower mountains. Breeds primarily in mature spruce/fir and Douglas fir forests, especially on steep slopes or near cliffs, less often in other types of coniferous forests, riparian and aspen forests. Migrates through all wooded habitats. Found up to 11,500 feet.

Fox sparrow, *Passerella iliaca*

A common summer resident between 8,000 and 11,000 feet. Breeds in riparian willow shrublands and willow meadows.

Black swift, *Cypseloides niger*

Rare to uncommon in mountain ranges, very rare in western valleys. Nests on cliffs near or behind high waterfalls. Forages in higher mountain elevations, up to 14,000 feet.

FISH

Colorado River cutthroat trout, *Oncorhynchus clarki pleuriticus*

Preferred habitat is streams of moderate gradient with rocky to gravelly substrate, and abundant riparian vegetation. Numerous attempts have been made in the Gunnison Basin to stock Class B CRCT by the CDOW. Class A CRCT have been stocked in west Beaver Creek above the falls.

AMPHIBIANS

Tiger salamander, *Ambystoma tigrinum*

Prefers lakes or ponds with still water, up to and maybe into alpine tundra. Appears to be unaffected by grazing or water quality. RMBL feels that it is doing fine in the Gunnison Basin.

Boreal western toad, *Bufo boreas boreas*

Prefers mountain meadow and deciduous riparian habitat. Found up to 10,000 feet. Requires open water for breeding. There is a known population in Brush Creek.

Northern leopard frog, *Rana pipiens*

Inhabits areas around emergent shoreline vegetation of all riparian habitats to alpine. Adults like medium-tall grass meadows in summer. Avoids overgrazed areas.

PLANT SPECIES OF SPECIAL CONCERN
KNOWN TO OCCUR ON THE GUNNISON NATIONAL FOREST

Common Name	*Scientific Name*	*Habitat*
Proposed plants		
Penland Alpine Fen	Euterma penlandii	> 12,000 ft. elevation
Candidate plants		
Gunnison Milkvetch	Astragalus anisus	Sagebrush, course soils <9000'
Skiff Milkvetch	Astragalus microcymbus	Dry hillsides below 8500 ft.
Leadville milkvetch	Astragalus molybdenus	Alpine tundra
Grand Mesa Penstemon or Tiger beardtongue	Penstemon mensarum	Mt. slopes on Grand Mesa
Special concern plants		
Altai Cotton-sedge or White bristle cotton-grass	Eriophorum altaicum	High Mt. Bogs above 9600 ft.
Alpine N.-rockcress	Braya humilis humilis	Around 12,000 feet in limestone tundra
Smoth N.-rockcress	Braya glabella var glabella	Around 12,000 feet in limestone tundra
Woolly fleabane	Erigeron lanatus	alpine screes
Penstemon-like gilia	Gilia penstemonoides	in cracks of cliffs
Hapeman's coolwort	Sullivantia hapemanii	cracks in cliffs with limy water
Comb-hair whitlow-grass	Draba pectinipila	known north of Gothic, Alpine rocky talus slopes
Colorado tansy-aster	Machaeranthera coloradoensis	gravelly areas in high mt. parks and dry tundra

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APPENDIX C

COMMENTS ON THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND THE RESPONSE TO COMMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

A 30 day public comment period for the Taylor Loop Recreation Environmental Assessment was established from February 25 to March 28, 1994. Copies of the EA were mailed to 72 individuals and organizations. News articles describing the proposal, and explaining the comment period were published in the Crested Butte Chronicle Pilot and the Gunnison Country Times.

Nine letters of response to the EA were received. In addition verbal comments were received from members of the Taylor Park Cattle Pool, the Gunnison County Planning Commission, the Gunnison County Road and Bridge Department and Gary Sprung of the High Country Citizens Alliance. This Appendix to the EA lists the comments received and response to those comments.

II. COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

1. One-hundred new campgrounds in Taylor Park. Why? Where?

RESPONSE: The EA analyzes alternatives that range from no change in the number of developed sites (developed sites includes campsites and picnic sites), to an increase in developed sites by 101 sites. The increases proposed in the Preferred Alternative would be additions of approximately 15 sites in Lottis and Lakeview campgrounds, and a new 100 site Texas Creek Campground. (Sites would be lost with the closing of Lodgepole and Cold Springs Campgrounds for a net increase of 96 sites in the Preferred Alternative). See the EA for Maps 1 and 2, depicting the location of these campgrounds, and Tables 1 and 2 for the alternatives and a summary of numbers of developed sites proposed in each alternative.

Pages 1-2 of the EA describe the Purpose and Need for the proposal. Management direction in the Forest Plan states that the Forest will meet 50% of the increased demand for developed recreation. The Plan also indicates that demand exceeds supply for developed recreation opportunities in the Taylor Park area.

2. Paving of 4.1 Miles of roads. Why? Where? I don't think it's necessary to pave the road to the dump station.

We do support paving the short section beyond Spring Creek Campground.

We support the paving of that portion of the Tincup Road to the RV dump station and the reconstruction of the bridges.

RESPONSE: Paving of existing roads is proposed in three locations. The rationale for paving is specific to the site.

Spring Creek Road - Extending the paving to include the area in front of the Spring Creek campground is proposed to reduce the effects of road dust in the campground. Adding paving to the short steep section on the approach to the Little Falls bridge is proposed to reduce a safety problem from washboarding on this very steep section of road.

Tincup Road - Paving to the sewage lagoon and existing dump station is intended to increase the number of people using this facility; reducing the effects in remote areas from people dumping their

holding tanks. Other options for providing dumping facilities in the park were dropped from further consideration.

3. **Why public rest rooms at the existing dump station in Taylor Park?**

RESPONSE: There is a demand for public rest rooms along the route through Tincup as expressed by individuals such as the proprietors of the store in Tincup. Adding a facility to the existing dump station is the least cost means to meet this need. It adds a small structure to an existing public facility.

4. **To bring paved roads, flush toilets, hot showers and tourists who seek these modern amenities will be the end of Taylor Park as we know it.**

RESPONSE: The effects of adding these amenities to the project area is discussed in detail in the EA. See pages 11-15 and 37-46 of the EA.

5. **Consider improving the area's interpretive needs.**

RESPONSE: A Taylor Loop Interpretive Plan was prepared. The proposals outlined in this plan are a part of each of the alternatives except the No Action alternative.

6. **I support no new campgrounds in Taylor Canyon.**

RESPONSE: New campgrounds in the Canyon are not a part of any of the alternatives.

7. **No showers, Flush toilets or RV dump sites in the Canyon.**

RESPONSE: RV dump stations are not proposed in the Canyon. Showers and flush toilets are also not proposed in the canyon in the Preferred Alternative. They are a part of Alternative D.

8. **(Refer to the top of the last paragraph on page ten of the EA). The Gunnison County Lodging Tax Panel Marketing Plan is more specifically interested in attracting eco-tourists, or people interested in respectful behavior and appreciation of the environment.**

RESPONSE: This paragraph of the EA states that the alternatives, except possibly the No Action Alternative, promote the intent of this plan which is to attract tourists oriented toward outdoor activities. The comment further refines the intent of this plan. The alternatives except perhaps the no Action Alternative meet the intent of this plan as further refined by the comment. These alternatives meet this intent by proposing an extensive interpretive and public information effort to promote public awareness and ethical behavior, and by providing facilities that allow the public to have close contact with the environment which promotes appreciation.

9. **Cumulative effects analysis should also include timber, grazing, road use, and recreation use.**

RESPONSE: Cumulative effects were discussed for major environmental issues as identified through scoping and further refinement by the interdisciplinary team. Cumulative effects were listed for these issues only when effects could be identified by the interdisciplinary team.

Timber and grazing were not identified as major environmental issues for this proposed action therefore effects were not analyzed in this EA. Roads and several issues related to recreation were analyzed. Cumulative effects descriptions for "maintaining primitive character of the area" and "overall levels of use and capacity" can be found on page 15 of the EA.

10. **We do not want to see US Forest Service campgrounds turned into "the KOA experience". We do recognize the need for larger parking areas and wider roads to accommodate larger RV's; however these type of facilities should be limited to one or two campgrounds in the area.**

RESPONSE: The proposed action and alternatives would not turn the campgrounds into a KOA experience. The Forest Service setting is more remote, the density of campsites within the campground is much lower than in a KOA facility, and the level of screening provided in campgrounds within the project area far exceeds that found at KOA, Park Service, or state park facilities found in the region. Although we are proposing to add amenities to some campgrounds, we will continue to be the most significant supplier of camping opportunities on the more remote, primitive and rustic end of the spectrum, regardless of the alternative chosen.

11. **We see a need for the public to become more educated toward the environment and natural resources.**

RESPONSE: This need would be met with all the alternatives except the No Action, through implementation of the Taylor Loop Interpretive Plan.

12. **We would like to emphasize the need to keep Taylor Canyon and Taylor Park as multiple use areas.**

RESPONSE: These areas will remain multiple use areas as defined in the GMUG Forest Plan, regardless of the alternative chosen.

13. **There is need to locate a gravel source for work on Spring Creek and other roads scheduled for dust retardant.**

RESPONSE: A gravel source was not identified as a part of the proposed action or alternatives. If Alternative B, C or D is chosen, and funds are appropriated to implement the chosen alternative then an engineering report will be initiated to determine possible gravel sources within the project area, and an environmental analysis will be conducted for developing a source.

Independent of this project proposal, efforts to locate a gravel source in the Spring Creek area are likely to occur in the near future.

14. **We question the placement of the short section of paving near the top of Spring Creek as it might represent an icing problem during the hunting season.**

RESPONSE: Effects of paving the "Little Falls" section of the Spring Creek Road are described on page 58 and 59 of the EA. Because of the volume of traffic and the steepness of the road, frequent blading would be required to eliminate washboarding in the absence of paving. Paving this short section of road would reduce safety problems during the high use summer season by removing the washboarding and providing a surface with better traction.

During the fall hunting season this section of road is often snow packed. The concern focuses on whether the snow packed road will be more hazardous if it's paved or gravel surfaced and washboarded. A steep snow packed road will be safer to negotiate if it is an even surface vs being underlain by washboarding.

15. **Would like to see Taylor Canyon Road repaired before new improvements are implemented. Would not like to see the FS advertise and draw people to our new facilities, then cause people to wait through the road reconstruction process. The sequencing would be better to repair the road first.**

We encourage the construction of roads concurrent or prior to the construction of campground sites.

RESPONSE: Appendix A of the EA lists the following management recommendation: "If timing of project funding allows, implement additions to developed site capacity in the project area after repairs to the Taylor Canyon Road have been made."

16. **The EA has been done very thoroughly and certainly reflects the concerns and ideas of the property owners and visitors to the canyon. The recommendations in the report if implemented, will help maintain the character and ambience of the Canyon.**

RESPONSE: Thank you!

17. **Concerned about the construction of the raft launch site in the Canyon just upstream of the White Water property. (This comment was followed by a detailed listing of the specific concerns with this project. A second letter also focused on concerns with this raft launch site.))**

RESPONSE: The raft launch site at "The Slot" as described in this comment, is a project that is a part of the Taylor Canyon Access (TCA) project. This project is separate from the Taylor Loop Recreation Project, and therefore is not within the scope of this EA.

18. **Why convert River's End to day use when there are a lot of people camping there now who seem to enjoy it.**

RESPONSE: Page T-2 of Table 1 of the EA describes options considered for management of River's End Campground. Alternatives A and B would leave this site as a campground, and Alternatives C and D would convert the site to day use. With Alternatives C and D the management approach would be to provide only day use facilities in the immediate vicinity of the reservoir. In the reservoir area, all camping facilities in Alternatives C and D would be provided away from the reservoir itself in more screened areas at Lakeview and the newly proposed Texas Creek campground.

19. **Why close Lodgepole and Cold Springs Campgrounds.**

RESPONSE: These are examples of sites that evolved into campgrounds over time. They started as a favorite fishing spot and dispersed campsite and over time the Forest Service added a fire grate, a table, a toilet etc. until a campground eventually existed. Parking spurs and roads are too small to accommodate many of todays vehicles. Toilets and campsites are inaccessible and in need of repair. These campgrounds are in very confined locations squeezed tightly between the Canyon wall and the highway. Both campgrounds have sites located only a few feet from the highway. The cost to retrofit and reconstruct these campgrounds is nearly the same as building a new campground.

Alternatives A and B would leave campgrounds in place at these two sites. Alternatives C and D would close these campgrounds and replace these sites with campground expansions in other locations (at Lottis and Lakeview Campgrounds where space exists to do the job right), and with the construction of a new campground at Texas Creek, again where space and terrain allow us to do the job right.

20. **Concerned that although Lottis Creek Campground is a nice location there is limited access to the river and where are the additional people going to go?**

RESPONSE: Lottis creek itself provides hiking and picnicking opportunities. Some people will choose to get in their cars and take day trips to other locations to fish or access the river.

21. **Concerned that any change to Lottis Creek Campground be within the existing fenced area so that expansion does not impact livestock movement around the campground.**

RESPONSE: As proposed, the expansion to Lottis Creek Campground would be located on the North side of Lottis Creek and the road to the trailhead. It may require a minor realignment in the existing fence which would be determined during the design phase. Expansion of the campground should not have a noticeable effect on moving cattle through the area.

22. **Would like to see no bridge at River's End and the area behind the lake non-motorized.**

Concern that the increase use on trails into the area behind the lake will negatively impact elk migration and bighorn sheep use.

RESPONSE: The proposal for a bridge at River's End was considered early in the development of this proposed action and scoping. It is no longer a part of any of the alternatives for this project and therefore is not a part of the EA. It has also been considered in the analysis of the Gunnison Spur of the Colorado Trail, which is not a part of the Taylor Loop Recreation Project. At this time a bridge at this location is no longer being considered as a part of this project either.

23. **Like the idea of small amphitheaters in some campgrounds where talks can be given. Would like to participate by giving programs at these campgrounds.**

RESPONSE: Small amphitheaters for interpretive programs are proposed in the preferred alternative, for Lottis, Lakeview and Texas Creek Campgrounds. As always we welcome local folks who have programs to present to the public.

24. **Would like trails designed so that livestock walking on them would not damage the trails. Concern by cattle permittees that they not want be given responsibility for trail maintenance.**

RESPONSE: Where cattle use of trails is expected this use is considered in the design standards used for trail construction or reconstruction. Asking permittees to be responsible for trail maintenance is not a part of the proposed action or Alternatives, and is beyond the scope of the EA.

25. **Concerned about human waste problems at Texas Lakes and at the Wilderness trailhead. Suggest we add some type of toilet facility in addition to dispersed sites called for in the proposed action.**

RESPONSE: The effects of the proposed action and alternatives for dispersed recreation areas are described on pages 18 and 19, and 50 and 51 of the EA. The problem at Texas Lakes is found in other remote areas also. Adding toilet facilities is only proposed in those locations where the problem is severe and the facility would be in keeping with the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) of the area. Examples include Bull Point and the Pot Holes. These sites are in a Rural and Roaded Natural ROS setting where a toilet facility is not out of place. Texas Lakes is in an Semi-Primitive setting where adding a toilet facility would be less in character. Alternatives B, C and D propose the use of visitor information and education on the proper disposal of human waste, as opposed to adding additional structures to these more primitive settings.

26. **I want to thank you and your staff for listening to the residents and property owners in the area and changing this plan to conform to their desires and concerns.**

27. **The final report that you submitted somewhat restores my faith in "the system".**

28. **There is no mention of the reservoir's water quality or storage capacity in the description of the affected environment.**

RESPONSE: Description of affected environment is not required in an Environmental Assessment, although this EA does describe the existing conditions relating to the major issues identified through scoping and interdisciplinary team review. The reservoir's water quality and storage capacity was not identified as a major environmental issue.

29. **There is little mention of potential effects to the reservoir from the proposed action or the alternatives. Under all alternatives there is potential for the reservoir to be affected by actions adjacent to the reservoir, or it's feeder streams. Increased sedimentation due to construction activities and /or increased recreational use of the area could reduce the water storage capacity of the reservoir area at a faster rate than resulting from natural sedimentation. Ineffectively treated waste water from Taylor Park Sewage Lagoon, or the proposed showers and flush toilets at Lakeview and Texas Creek Campgrounds could add nitrates and coliform bacteria to the reservoir. Improper use of magnesium chloride for dust abatement in the area of the reservoir could allow that compound to pollute the reservoir. To minimize the potential for impacts to Taylor Reservoir, the Forest Service should fully commit to the following mitigation measures, as applicable, for each alternative:**

    All waste water systems will comply with the Colorado Department of Health requirements; will be fully contained; and there will be no discharge of effluent to Taylor Park Reservoir or it's feeder streams.

    All mitigating measures and management recommendations contained in appendix A of the EA.

RESPONSE: Appendix A lists mitigating measures to be used for all alternatives. These include measures to prevent soil loss and protect water quality during implementation of construction/reconstruction and dust retardant projects, see pages 61-62 of the EA.

With the preferred alternative, restroom facilities would exist at three locations near the reservoir, Taylor Park Boat House and River's End picnic area (where facilities exist now), and Bull Point. All of these facilities would be of a contained vault design and wastes would be pumped and transported to the sewage lagoon or the Gunnison facility for treatment.

The sewage lagoon, located approximately 4 miles from the reservoir, is a system that does not return water except through evaporation. It is currently being used at approximately 20% of it's design capacity. Monitoring wells are in place and used during the operating season to assure the system is not leaking. Quality of the water in the these wells is consistently high, and much higher than water tested in nearby Willow Creek.

The preferred alternative includes flush restrooms and shower facilities for Lakeview and Texas Creek campgrounds. These facilities would be approximately 1/2 to 1 mile from the reservoir. Using created wetlands as a means to treat wastes from these systems will be investigated, see page 61 of the EA. Leach field systems will be used where most practical and only where water quality and State waste water standards can be met.

30. **The Gunnison County Board of Commissioners sincerely appreciates the efforts that you have made to address the public's comments on the last round of discussion regarding this project. We believe that, for the most part, those concerns have been addressed.**

31. **There are several areas in which we continue to have concerns. The first is the impacts associated with development of a 100 unit high amenity campground at Texas Creek. Such a project will represent the development of one of the largest campgrounds in the County, including commercial operations. Normally, such a project would undergo land use review and considerable public input. We would request that the United States Forest Service participate in the local process.**

RESPONSE: The Taylor Loop Recreation Project has been developed with extensive public involvement and comment, see pages 5-7 of the EA. Effects of implementing the proposed action including the Texas Creek campground and alternatives to it, are detailed in the EA.

If a decision is made to implement this project, the Forest Service is willing as always to discuss, receive input and, to the degree possible, coordinate the implementation of this project with the County.

32. **Want to compliment you and your staff on a job well done!**

33. **People in their Winnebagos have their own toilets and showers! Why should we, through our taxes, have to supply them more?**

RESPONSE: This proposal includes reconstructing many of the campgrounds and building new facilities to meet the needs of the visitors that are coming now and will be coming in the future. To the degree possible sites will be designed to accommodate a range of recreationists from people with tents, to people with trailers or RV's. The proposed action would include a shower house facility at two of the 13 campgrounds in the project area.

The shower facilities at Texas Creek would be designed to accommodate the campers from the campground, (which includes 15 walk in tent only campsites), and dispersed campers from outlying areas of the park. This facility could be made available for a private enterprise to design, build and operate, thereby saving the tax payers the expense.

34. **Physically challenged people have every opportunity that can be dreamed of given to them. Why should we, through our taxes, have to make every campground available to this small percentage of the population?**

RESPONSE: Approximately half the US population either has a disability or is effected by someone who does. Recreation facilities need to be family accessible, meaning all individuals in the family ought to be able to participate together in the recreation experience, not just the most fit and able bodied members of the family.

Although we would make every recreation facility accessible, we would not be able to make all areas of all facilities "fully" accessible, because of the physical limitations of many of our existing sites.

Making facilities accessible is the right thing to do, and it's the law, (refer to the Americans With Disabilities Act).

35. **The congestion will not be alleviated by putting in more trailer and Winnebago campsites in Taylor Park and closing campgrounds in Taylor Canyon. Why should we persist in prompting people to love the Forests to death?**

RESPONSE: We can influence and minimize congestion by providing facilities where space and capacity exists and reducing facilities where space and capacity is reached or exceeded.

If the population which is increasingly being dominated by urban populations does not continue to receive exposure to and develop an appreciation for public forests, the support for the concept of public Forest may not continue.

36. **The survey by people who used the campgrounds clearly showed that they did not want urbanization of Taylor Canyon and Taylor Park.**

RESPONSE: The proposed action and the alternatives to it would not result in urbanization of Taylor Canyon and Taylor Park. The proposed action includes only facilities and recreation opportunities that are consistent in character with what is present now.

37. **Trails not being clearly marked for winter use is stretching things a bit, I think. For what purpose does the Forest Service require signage.**

RESPONSE: Trail signs and markings are used to identify where trails are located. The proposed action would add trail markings for some winter trails that are not now marked and are difficult to follow in winter, presenting a safety concern. The vast majority of trails in the project area would remain unmarked for winter travel, leaving them for those who prefer a more primitive experience.

38. **I think that this is just one another example of how the government will kill us with spending our tax money.**

39. **Please keep some middle ground between Wilderness and urbanized camping. I don't want my grandchildren to never know what camping really "used to be": a tent, a firepit, a stream and a fishing pole, and good old human body odor and dirt!!!**

RESPONSE: Primitive dispersed camping is an important part of the recreation opportunity that is provided now and would be provided with the proposed action. Map 2, and pages 1-2 and 50-51 detail the proposed action and effects in dispersed areas like Texas Creek, Italian Creek, upper Taylor Creek, Spring Creek and the Mirror Lake area.

The single largest form of camping opportunity provided in the project area would be dispersed and primitive camping.